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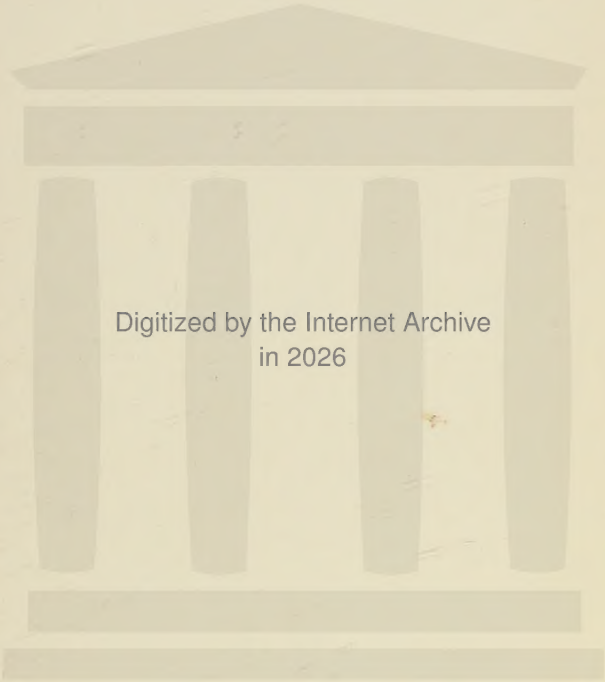
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LEADING AMERICAN ESSAYISTS

LEADING AMERICAN ESSAYISTS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE
GREATER ENGLISH POETS
OF THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

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PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

Biographies of Leading Americans

Edited by W. P. Trent

LEADING AMERICAN ESSAYISTS

BY

WILLIAM MORTON PAYNE, LL. D.

WITH FOUR PORTRAITS

NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1910

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TO

E. G. S.

WITH THE FRIENDSHIP OF MANY YEARS
PAST AND TO COME

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

In the preparation of the present volume, the author has relied almost wholly upon the work of his predecessors. The accounts of Irving, Emerson, Thoreau, and Curtis, in the "American Men of Letters" series, written respectively by Charles Dudley Warner, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Frank B. Sanborn, and Edward Cary, have been found of constant use. In the cases of Irving and Emerson, what may be called the "official" biographies,—the "Life and Letters of Washington Irving," by Pierre M. Irving, and the "Memoirs of Ralph Waldo Emerson," by James Elliot Cabot—have provided the chief part of the material. On the subject of Emerson, further help has been obtained from the recently published "Journals" of his early life, the Carlyle-Emerson correspondence, and the brief biographies by George Willis Cooke, Richard Garnett, George Edward Woodberry, and Frank B. Sanborn. In the case of Thoreau, further help has been obtained from Mrs. Annie Russell Marble's "Thoreau: His Home, Friends, and Books" and Henry S. Salt's sketch in the "Great Writers" series.

In the case of Curtis, the biography by Edwar
Cary, mentioned above, has supplied most of th
facts, although a word should be said for the usefu
ness of the Dwight-Curtis correspondence, the Nor
ton edition of the orations, and the commemorativ
addresses by Parke Godwin, William Winter, an
John W. Chadwick. The facts given in the Intro
duction have been compiled from a great variety o
sources.

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PORTRAITS

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LEADING AMERICAN ESSAYISTS

INTRODUCTION

The English essay is a literary species not easily efined. The term has been applied even in modern mes to productions as far apart as the "Essays of lia" and the "Essay on Population." Between ese extremes come countless writings, ranging om the solemnity of the "Essays and Reviews" to e light-heartedness, not to say the frivolity, of The New Republic." These contrasting examples om English literature may be matched on the merican side of the Atlantic by naming Horace reeley's "Essays on American Farming" with onald Mitchell's "Reveries of a Bachelor," the Essays" of Count Rumford with Irving's "Sketch-ook," and the miscellaneous writings of the elder enry James with those of the younger.

We may, however, omit from the reckoning with-ut any serious question both the Reverend Mr. Ialthus and the contributors to the "Essays and eviews," both the American pioneer of physical ience and the American journalist, together with e authors of many other writings that are styled ssays" rather by accident than of set purpose. here will remain, after all such eliminations, a

sufficiently diversified body of productions, whi
may be described as occupying a sort of litera
limbo between the creative forms of poem, play, a
novel, on the one hand, and the more substant
embodiments of knowledge or of speculative thoug
on the other. To this category we may assign
the short prose compositions (and some of the long
ones) that exhibit the mark of style, that give plea
ure by virtue of the form of their expression in
spective of its context (although that context m
possess intrinsic value), and that have, in cons
quence, a clearly recognized place in the history
literature. Our definition must be classic enough
include almost all prose that is not cast in the mo
of fiction or the drama, and that does not find a pla
in the solid literature of some special subject,
history, science, politics, or theology.

Surveying the field of American literature wi
this definition for a divining-rod, we find little
deflect the magic wand until we approach the regi
of the nineteenth century. The causes that left t
two preceding centuries of our literary annals barr
of *belles-lettres* in the narrower sense operated al
to discourage all prose writing that was not heavi
weighted with didactic purpose, and too blunt
put to have the saving quality of charm. There
much matter of interest in our colonial prose, b
whatever savor of style it may at times possess

ıther the result of *naïveté* than of conscious art. readable collection of excerpts from the prose riters between the Jamestown settlement and the evolutionary struggle may easily be put together, ut the whole period yields no writer who is now ead, save in illustrative snippets, for strictly literary tisfaction. The prodigious Cotton Mather and ıe keen Jonathan Edwards are nobody's favorite uthors nowadays, while the polemic of lesser theolo- ans and political pamphleteers is now as dead as ıe passions which it once aroused.

The American essay, then, finds no representa- ves in this earlier period. The word is frequently sed, as in the "Essays" of John Witherspoon nd Pelatiah Webster, but the compositions thus de- ribed are wolves in sheep's clothing. The essay English literature, in the classical eighteenth- ntury form given it by a succession of writers from ddison to Johnson, had run its course, and become nbalmed in the collection of "British Essayists," efore its first feeble imitations were produced in merica. This fact is in general accordance with e most characteristic feature of the development of merican literature. From its beginnings until well ong in the nineteenth century, our literature was nstantly harking back to the English models of earlier generation, and giving a new lease of life forms and manners of expression that the parent

country had outgrown. This thesis, which has bee elaborately discussed by Professor Barrett Wendel is of primary importance for the comprehension o American literary history. Just as our writers o the seventeenth century were belated Elizabethan so our budding essayists of the later eighteent century were survivals from the period of Quee Anne and the early Georges.

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) is the only Amer can writer of the eighteenth century who has charm for modern readers, and his "Autobiography is still secure in its claim upon our interest. Frank lin may also be reckoned the first of American essay ists, by virtue of the "Poor Richard Sayings" th "Bagatelles," and many brief sketches publishe in newspapers and other ephemeral prints. For th purpose of the present series of biographies, he i otherwise classified, and a full account of his life i given in another volume.

Francis Hopkinson (1737–1791) was born i Philadelphia, held several important public offices was a member of the Continental Congress, and on of the first judges appointed by Washington unde the Federal Constitution. He was a man of man accomplishments, musician, painter, and write and member of numerous learned societies. Hi "Miscellaneous and Occasional Writings," collecte in three volumes and published the year after hi

leath, include a number of essays in the Addisonian nanner.

John Trumbull (1750–1831) was one of the group f writers known as the "Hartford Wits." He was precocious youth, and it is said that he passed the Yale entrance examinations at the age of seven. He lid not enter college, however, until he was thirteen, y which time he had anticipated a larger part of he course, and could devote a part of his energy to ther matters. While still at Yale, and working for he master's degree, he planned a series of essays on he "Spectator" model, and wrote most of them him- elf, although Timothy Dwight contributed a few. This series was called "The Medler," and was pub- shed in 1769; it was followed by a second series alled "The Correspondent." Trumbull was the only nember of the group to be considered as an essayist, nd he, after these early years, turned to satirical erse, joining Dwight and Barlow in the composition f turgid poems.

Washington Irving (1783–1859) was the first of merican essayists to achieve wide-spread and last- ng fame, and the story of his life is told at length sewhere in the present volume. This seems to be he proper place for a few words about his associate, ames Kirke Paulding (1779–1860), who was a rolific writer, and is faintly remembered, although ardly read, in these later years. He was the joint

author, with Irving, of the twenty numbers tha made up the first series of "Salmagundi" (1807) and the sole author of the second series (1819). In the interval, he had written some amusing satires upon the War of 1812, the most important of them being "The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan," besides "Letters from the South" and "The Backwoodsman." He wrote voluminously for over forty years, becoming in turn satirical poet, novelist, biographer, and politi cal controversialist. He figured in public life as a member of Van Buren's Cabinet. His place in literature was that of the useful pioneer who pre pares the way for men of more brilliant talents.

Richard Henry Dana (1787–1879), poet, story writer, and essayist, was one of the founders of "The North American Review," and wrote "The Idle Man," a serial miscellany which ran for six numbers. Here we may find an essay on "Kean's Acting," which is perhaps the most important early American example of dramatic criticism. His con tributions to the "Review" were numerous, and in clude studies of several English poets, which establish his position as one of the pioneers of serious literary criticism in this country.

The serial publication of the "Spectator" type designed as a vehicle for the ideas and fancies of some individual writer, had a long and flourish

ng career in eighteenth-century England, and, as ve have seen, was revived in America upon sev- eral occasions, the most notable example being the "Salmagundi" of Irving and Paulding. In more poradic fashion, the pamphlet, in both countries, ong served a similar purpose and supplied a similar need. After the decline of the individual medium of niscellaneous literary expression, the Annual became favorite form of publication, and flourished for many years in England and America alike. A typ- cal example in this country was "The Talisman" (1828–1830), which numbered Bryant and Verplanck among its contributors. We now see this to have been a transitional form, linking the earlier individ- ual publication with the later magazine. In the magazine became merged the pamphlet, and the ndividual essay-periodical, and the annual mis- cellany of many hands, and the new vehicle, once stablished in favor, put the older ones out of the unning. The magazine provided literary aspirants f all sorts with the opportunity to prove their qual- ty; *la carrière ouverte aux talens* was the underlying rinciple of its vitality. Great numbers of maga- ines were started in this country in the early years f the nineteenth century; most of them drew a eeble breath of life for a year or two, and then died natural death, but a few survived, and became mportant influences in our literary development.

The opportunity that they gave the essayist is apparent; he was the reason of their being in those early years, and he has ever since flourished by their grace although crowded to the wall in these later years by the picture, the short story, and the book published on the instalment plan.

Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806–1867) was so important a figure in his own day that he calls for rather extended consideration in any account of the American essay, although he is now little more than a shadow in the general literary consciousness. His career matched Irving's in some respects, particularly in that of European experience and vogue, and he almost vied with the older writer in popularity. Born in Portland, and graduated from Yale in 1827, he entered active life with a reputation for brilliancy that already made him a man of mark in far wider circles than those of the college. He had taken many prizes both in and out of school, and was a welcome contributor to numerous newspapers and magazines and annuals. A volume of his poems was published the very year that he left college, and went to Boston to make his way in journalism and literature. He lived in Boston four years, scribbled industriously, published a second volume of poems, and started "The American Monthly Magazine" of which he wrote a large share of the contents. The magazine failed after about two years of lively

xistence, leaving Willis in debt. It was nominally ıerged in the "New York Mirror," a weekly paper, nd Willis was engaged as associate editor. The onnection thus formed lasted, although the name f the paper was changed several times, for the re-ıainder of Willis's life.

The first enterprise of his New York associates as to scrape together a purse, and send Willis to urope as a roving correspondent for the "Mirror." Ie was to support himself while abroad by weekly tters at ten dollars each. He sailed in October, 831, and did not return until May, 1836. No such ay as this had been contemplated, but he made ıch good use of his opportunities, and the oppor-ınities were themselves so extraordinary, that the ve years proved highly profitable for him, both nancially and in reputation. He was very fortu-ate in his introductions, and was passed on from ountry to country with new letters, making every-here new friends. He spent a long time in France ıd Italy, then took a six months' cruise on the Iediterranean and to the Levant, then went to ngland for a couple of years. He was a general vorite wherever he went, and came into personal lations with many of the most famous men and omen of the time. In his correspondence he wrote ther too freely about his new acquaintances, and hen his letters were unexpectedly reproduced in the

English prints, they got him into hot water. In tw cases, he nearly had duels on his hands, one of ther with the redoubtable Captain Marryatt. Miss Mit ford's description of him as "a very elegant youn man, more like one of the best of our peers' son than a rough republican" gives some notion of th impression he made socially. In 1835, he marrie an English girl, and a few months later brought hi bride to the new world. His descriptive letters t the "Mirror," most of them under the heading c "Pencillings by the Way," were 139 in numbe They were issued, in part, by an English publishe in book form. In England also were published during the author's sojourn, a new volume of hi poems, and three volumes of "Inklings of Adver ture." These books brought good returns, an Willis was also in considerable demand as a con tributor to English periodicals.

The reputation thus made at thirty stood him i good stead upon his return home, and for man years thereafter. In 1837, he went to the countr to live, establishing a home, Glenmary, on th banks of Owego Creek. Here he remained fiv years, except for 1839–1840, when he made a secon visit to Europe. During these years he wrote severa plays, which had a moderate success in both Eng land and America. The year 1839–1840 was als marked by a new journalistic venture, "The Co

air," which was distinguished by having Thackeray or a contributor. Its title was the symbol of its practical intent, for it frankly pilfered from current English literature, its editor thinking this to be a good way of working for international copyright. Three pieces of hack-work, descriptive of American, Canadian, and Irish scenery, belong to this period, as does also "A l'Abri," also known as "Letters from under a Bridge," which is perhaps the author's most charming work. In 1842, the Glenmary home was sold, and Willis spent the next decade in New York, making a third European journey in 1845. In this year also his wife died, and his second marriage took place a year after. In 1846, the journal with which he had long been connected underwent its final transformation, and became the "Home Journal," under which title Willis shared in its editorship for the rest of his life. In 1852, he again made a country home, this time on the Hudson, naming the place Idlewild. In 1857, he published "Paul Fane," his only novel, a poor thing, but his only book that was all of one piece. Most of his prose books were patched together out of his journalistic writings. More than a dozen titles might be named, besides those already given. He died in 1867, on his sixty-first birthday. The familiar lines in Lowell's "Fable for Critics" sum up with kindly accuracy his characteristics as an essayist.

"His prose had a natural grace of its own,
And enough of it, too, if he'd let it alone,
But he twitches and jerks so one fairly gets tired,
And is forced to forgive where he might have admired.
Yet whenever it slips away free and unlaced
It runs like a stream with a musical waste,
And gurgles along with the liquidest sweep.
'Tis not deep as a river, but who'd have it deep?"

George Henry Calvert (1803–1889), although a southerner by extraction, being a descendant of the founders of Maryland, belongs rather with the New England group of writers by virtue of his residence in Newport for the last forty-five years of his life. He was one of the American pioneers in the study of German literature, and an interpreter of Goethe and Schiller. He has over thirty volumes to his credit, and about half of them are classifiable as examples of essay-writing. He wrote all his life exhibiting a pedestrian talent, but making no very marked impression.

Henry Theodore Tuckerman (1813–1871), a writer now almost forgotten, but with a considerable following in his day, was born in Boston, and spent his later years in New York. He published books of essays, to the number of a dozen or more, their contents including literary criticism, sketches of travel, and musings upon life. A graceful writer rather than a forceful one, he contributed his rivulet to the stream of culture, and was known as a

mpathetic interpreter of life and art and litera-
re.

The Concord group of philosophers and writers
ve us in Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and
enry David Thoreau (1817–1863) two of the great-
t of American essayists. They are dealt with else-
here in this volume, but the fact that they over-
adow their associates should not prevent us from
ing mindful of the very respectable merits of Al-
tt and Ripley, of Ellery Channing and Margaret
ller.

Amos Bronson Alcott (1799–1888) was born on
farm, had little schooling, worked as a boy in a
ck factory, and traveled for some years as a
ddler and book agent. Teaching was his real
n, and he found himself in charge of a Connecti-
t country school in 1826. Eight years later, he
tablished a school of his own in Boston, and was
a time successful. But his educational ideas
re too advanced, and his method too unconven-
nal, to make the success lasting, and some five
ars later he removed with his family to Concord.
ere his eccentricities of thought and action found
more congenial environment, and he became an
acle in the little group of transcendentalists. His
oughts were turned toward community life, but
ook Farm was not idealistic enough to suit him,
d he set up a venture of his own, naming it Fruit-

lands. This did not last long, and its dishearten
founder was thrown back upon philosophizin
His philosophy found expression more in spee
than in writing, and for many years he travel
about, conducting "conversations" in small grou
of the elect. His mode of thought was so abstra
that he became the butt of humorists, and even h
friends looked askance at his "Orphic Sayings," a
they weighted the pages of "The Dial." In 187
the establishment of the Concord Summer Scho
of Philosophy and Literature crowned the life-wo
of the octogenarian sage. His reputation as a
essayist rests upon a scant sheaf of writings,—h
contributions to "The Dial," his "Tablets" (1868
his "Concord Days" (1872), and his "Table Talk
(1877). These but imperfectly represent the ma
and our sense of his importance rests rather upon th
record of his career as we find it in the tributes pa
him by Emerson and his other Concord associates.

George Ripley (1802–1880) is an American essa
ist who has left no book worth mentioning to pe
petuate his memory. His writings were all fugitiv
although he at one time contemplated bringing th
best of them together in two volumes to be e
titled "Books and Men." Yet those writings we
so considerable, and so influential in their day, th
their author cannot possibly be omitted from eve
so cursory a sketch as the present. He was grad

ed from Harvard, studied for the ministry, and
r a time preached in a Unitarian pulpit. He
aveled abroad, acquainted himself with French
d German literature, and made many transla-
ns. Removing to Concord, he became the founder
Brook Farm, and supplied the practical sagacity
ich kept "The Dial" afloat for its four years on
rilous seas. In 1849, he went to New York upon
eeley's invitation, and became literary editor of
e "Tribune." In those columns he wrote volumi-
usly for over thirty years, besides doing outside
erary work, and editing the "New American
clopædia" jointly with Charles A. Dana. Dur-
g his earlier years, he was thought by many to be
e chief among our critics of literature, a judgment
ich would not now be approved, although a gen-
us tribute to his industry, his kindliness, his ele-
tion of thought, and his zeal for intellectual good,
richly deserved.

William Ellery Channing (1818–1901), a nephew
the great Unitarian divine, himself an essayist, was
desultory writer who made his home at Concord
1842, married a sister of Margaret Fuller, was the
end of Emerson and the companion of Thoreau,
ontributor to "The Dial," and a poet of consider-
e note. His contribution to the literature of the
ay is comprised chiefly in two volumes, "Con-
sations in Rome between an Artist, a Catholic,

and a Critic" (1847), and "Thoreau, the Poe Naturalist" (1873). Several of the famous write of the Concord group lived to a venerable age, bu Channing was the only one of them to draw breat in the twentieth century.

Sarah Margaret Fuller (1810–1850) was born a Cambridge, and was the victim of a strenuous edu cational regimen. Her father was an opinionate person of some political consequence, and Margare the oldest of his eight children, was subjected to forcing process which started her in Latin at si and made her in early girlhood a prodigy of learning Colonel Higginson thus describes what was for her typical day at the age of fifteen. "She rose befo five in the summer, walked an hour, practiced a hour on the piano, breakfasted at seven, read Si mondi's 'European Literature' in French till eigh then Brown's 'Philosophy' till half past nine, the went to school for Greek at twelve, then practice again till dinner. After the early dinner she rea two hours in Italian, then walked or rode, and i the evening played, sang, and retired at eleven t write in her diary." It was an abnormal life, y it did not altogether exclude the natural interes of childhood. But it accounts for such a passage a the following, from the diary of her twenty-thir year. "All youthful hopes of every kind, I hav pushed from my thoughts. I will not, if I can hel

, lose an hour in castle-building and repining—
o much of that already. I have now a pursuit of
nmediate importance: to the German language and
erature I will give my undivided attention. . . .
lease God now to keep my mind composed, that
may store it with all that may be hereafter con-
ucive to the best good of others."

In 1833, the family removed to Groton, a country
wn forty miles from Boston, where Margaret spent
e next three years. They were no less busy than
e earlier ones, for she had many household duties,
cluding "teaching little Fullers," and the care of
e family sewing. But she found time to read also,
nd went on with her Kant and Goethe, her theology
nd architecture and history and astronomy. She
anslated Goethe's "Tasso," and made her first
ppearance in print by publishing a defense of
rutus, written in reply to an article by George
ancroft. The death of her father in 1835 left the
mily poorly provided for; the plan of a European
ip was abandoned, and Margaret turned to teach-
g. She began with Alcott's school in Boston,
ving also lessons in foreign languages to private
asses. Then after a few months she went to
rovidence, taking a post in an academy, and occupy-
g it for about two years. When she left Provi-
ence she ended her school-teaching, although she
ntinued to take private pupils from time to time.

The family removed from Groton to Jamaica Plain, a Boston suburb, in 1839, remaining there for three years. The two years following (1842–1844) were spent in Cambridge. The five years thus accounted for were the period of the "conversations" which figure so prominently in Miss Fuller's life. These were weekly gatherings, attended by twenty or thirty women, for the discussion of such serious subjects as literature, art, ethics, education, religion, and the function of womanhood in the social economy. Miss Fuller took the lead, a few venturous spirits seconded her efforts, and the others kept to the passive part of listeners. Her method, says Colonel Higginson, "was to begin each subject with a short introduction, giving the outline of the subject, and suggesting the most effective points of view. This done, she invited questions or criticisms: if these lagged, she put questions herself, using persuasion for the timid, kindly raillery for the indifferent. There was always a theme, and a thread." Many voices have borne witness to the tonic influence of these discussions upon those who took part in them; on the other hand, outsiders poked a little fun at them, and one critic, Miss Harriet Martineau, then visiting America, treated them with undeserved contempt, saying that they "were spoiling a set of well-meaning women in a pitiable way." Miss Martineau's grievance was

at any set of intelligent persons should discuss
estions of abstract thought at a time when "the
erties of the republic were running out as fast
they could go, at a breach which another sort of
ct persons were devoting themselves to repair."
other words, the "conversations" were to be con-
mned because they did not take for their sole
ic the evil of slavery. Some people can never
made to understand that the cause of spiritual
edom is every whit as holy as the cause of bodily
edom.

Miss Fuller first made Emerson's acquaintance
en she visited him at Concord in 1836. From
at time on, her relations with the transcendental-
s were continuous and intimate. The so-called
anscendental Club took shape in the fall of 1836,
d Miss Fuller was one of its early members. It
s a peripatetic club, meeting, as occasion offered,
Cambridge, Watertown, Boston, and Concord.
1839, the project of a special organ for its views,
uited for some time, took definite shape, and the
lowing year "The Dial" entered upon its four
ars' term of precarious life. Miss Fuller was the
itor, and for the next two years gave her almost
divided attention to the work, drumming up con-
butions, toning down extravagances of expres-
n, and, when matter fell short, herself filling out
e contents. It was a wild team that she sought

to drive, and there was much pulling in differen directions at the same time. Alcott wished to b more "Orphic" than was wise, and Theodor Parker wished to be more outspoken than wa prudent. These conflicting forces she controlle with unexpected firmness, worked almost to th point of exhaustion, and finally, in 1842, was com pelled to give it up. It looked as though "Th Dial" must then disappear, but a new rally wa made to its support. Emerson undertook the editor ship, and it was given a second two years' lease o life.

An account of Margaret Fuller has to make som mention of Brook Farm, if only to correct a misap prehension. The character of Zenobia, in Haw thorne's "Blithedale Romance," is so generally take to be a portrait of Miss Fuller that it becomes nec essary to state, as Colonel Higginson puts it, tha she "had neither the superb beauty of Zenobia, no her physical amplitude, nor her large fortune, no her mysterious husband, nor her inclination to sui cide; nor, in fine, was she a member of the Broo Farm Community at all." But she numbered man warm friends among its members, and was a frequen visitor to the Farm, joining in its merrymakings an sharing in its aspirations.

In the summer of 1843, Miss Fuller took he first long journey, spending nearly four months i

hat was then "the far West," and is now merely
ie country surrounding the second largest city in
ie United States. Returning from this outing, she
repared for the press the book named "Summer
n the Lakes," her first original work. Before this,
ie had published in book form only two volumes of
anslation from the German—Eckermann's "Con-
ersations with Goethe" and a fragment of Bet-
na's correspondence. A small book on "Woman
i the Nineteenth Century" followed in 1844, and
ie whole edition was sold out in a week, much
) her delight. Toward the close of that year, she
ent to New York to live, at the instance of Horace
reeley, who had invited her to join forces with the
Tribune." For a time she was an inmate of the
reeley household. Her work with the "Tribune"
onsisted partly of literary criticism, and partly of
series of social studies, analyzing the causes of
overty and crime in the great city, and examining
; penal and charitable institutions. Her literary
iticism set a higher standard than had previously
een known in our journalism, substituted objective
dgments for the personalities then in vogue, and
troduced a new note of urbanity, and even of
smopolitanism. Its faults were a deadly serious-
ss unenlivened by any gleam of humor, and a
lted and inorganic style. A work entitled "Papers
Literature and Art," in two slender volumes, was

published in 1846, and reproduced the best work of her two years' sojourn in New York.

The last chapter of Miss Fuller's life is that which recounts her four years of life abroad, their joys, their vicissitudes, and their tragic ending. She sailed for England late in the summer of 1846, spent some time in Scotland, the north of England, and London, met Wordsworth and Mazzini, went to Paris and met Béranger and George Sand, proceeded to Italy early in 1847, and took up a residence in Rome. Toward the end of that year, she was married to the Marchese Ossoli, and the year following gave birth to a boy. This phase of her life is a little obscure, the marriage being secret, on account of her husband's relations to his family. He was a disciple of Mazzini, while his relatives were identified with the party of reaction and papal tyranny. The facts of essential importance are that she was an eye-witness of the short-lived Roman Republic and the Triumvirate of Mazzini, that she experienced the hardships of the siege and took an active part in the work of the hospitals, and that when the French forced their entrance into the capital, in the summer of 1849, she fled with her husband to the village in the Abruzzi where their child had been left in safe-keeping. Those experiences impelled her to write a book on the brief history of the Roman Republic, but the manuscript went down

ith her at sea. During the following winter season, ne exiles lived in Florence, and in the spring of 850 decided upon a journey to America. They mbarked on a merchant vessel from Leghorn, had n eventful voyage of two months, and on the morn- ng of July 19, 1850, were shipwrecked on the each of Fire Island, perishing in the very sight of ome and safety. Thus ended the career of the rst woman to take a high place among American riters, and to be considered without the need of aking any allowance for sex. The four volumes f her collected works, published five years after er death, are of no very vital interest to us now, ut they constitute a landmark in the history of our terature. In a certain elastic sense, Margaret Fuller as at once our Mrs. Browning and our Madame e Staël.

In this sketch of the American essay, the part layed by the Concord group of writers is now early done with, but we must remain long enough the neighborhood to outline the lives of a number f men whose associations are chiefly with Boston nd Cambridge. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 807–1882), Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), nd James Russell Lowell (1819–1891) are American ssayists of the first importance, but they are also oets of even more importance, and their biographies nd a place elsewhere in this series. Similarly,

Edward Everett Hale (1822–1909) should probably, by virtue of his profession, be given a place among the theologians, although he deserves a better name. After these exclusions, there remain for brief mention in the present connection three men of considerable importance.

Edwin Percy Whipple (1819–1886) was more completely a literary critic (and consequently an essayist) by profession than any American writer who preceded him. He was a Bostonian of little schooling, and the occupation of his early manhood was that of a banker's clerk. But he educated himself by wide reading, and at the age of twenty-four attracted attention by an essay on Macaulay. From that time on, he devoted himself mainly to writing and lecturing. He was a Lyceum favorite, and addressed many hundreds of audiences all over the country. For forty years he thus filled a place in the public eye, and the more important of his lectures, published in a series of nine volumes, gave him an equally wide constituency of readers. Some of the titles and dates are as follows: "Essays and Reviews" (1848), "Literature and Life" (1849), "Literature of the Life of Elizabeth" (1869), "Success and Its Conditions" (1871), and two posthumous volumes, "American Literature, and Other Papers" (1887), and "Outlooks on Society, Literature, and Politics" (1888). He was an earnest and

lished writer, conventional in his judgments, and ven to emphasis of the ethical aspect of whatever bject he might have under discussion. Lacking in th prescience and the deeper insight, his once conderable influence has so waned that it may now be id hardly to exist.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823—) the "last af" on the tree which symbolizes the golden literay age of Cambridge and Boston, has had a varied reer as clergyman, soldier, and man of letters. e was born in Cambridge, and graduated from arvard. He served as pastor to several Unitarian urches, was active as an abolitionist, and enlisted the Civil War with the Massachusetts volunteers. ter he was in command of a South Carolina regient of colored troops, and his experiences are deribed as his "Army Life in a Black Regiment." om the close of the war onward he devoted mainly literary work his long and busy life. He has been storian, biographer, translator, poet, and even (in e single case of "Malbone") novelist. The books hich place him in the category of American essays include "Out-Door Papers (1863), "Atlantic Essys" (1871), "Oldport Days" (1873), "Short Studies American Authors" (1879), "Women and Men" 887), "Travellers and Outlaws" (1888), "Conrning All of Us" (1892), "Cheerful Yesterdays" 898), and "Contemporaries" (1899). A rich and

stimulating writer, with a vigorous style which sometimes becomes tart when he grows controversial or forces the American note, he has a high place among our writers of prose, and a secure place in our affections.

Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908) was born in Cambridge, lived there practically all his life, and died in the house in which he was born. After his graduation from Harvard, he went into business life for a few years, and in the capacity of supercargo, made a long voyage to the East, returning by way of Europe. In 1853 he published a volume of "Considerations of Some Recent Social Theories." More European travel followed, devoted mainly to the study of art, and bearing fruit on his return in "Notes of Travel and Study in Italy" and an essay on Dante. He was active in the founding of "The Atlantic Monthly," and joined with Lowell during the Civil War in editing "The North American Review." He was also an influential factor in the establishment of "The Nation." When the war was over, and its chief problems on the way to settlement, he spent five more years in Europe. Soon after his return, he was made professor of the history of art at Harvard, and filled the chair from 1875 to 1898, when an emeritus title was bestowed upon him. He was happy in his literary friendships with the greatest writers of his time, and served after

heir death, as editor of their correspondence, such hen as Ruskin and Carlyle, Lowell and Curtis. His most important literary work, aside from his rose translation of Dante, was done in this capacity, nd as a writer for periodicals, or a contributor of troductions to other men's books. This studied lf-effacement makes the books that bear his name ut poorly representative of the work that he did r of the influence that he exerted. His scattered ritings, and those still in manuscript, would, if rought suitably together, greatly enhance his putation as an essayist to outward showing. He as one of the wisest and sanest of our commenta- rs upon literature and art, upon society and poli- cs, and the contagion of his spirit touched to fine sues unnumbered men and women of the younger eneration.

One of the closest of Norton's associates, both in terary sympathy, and in the struggle for high civic andards, was George William Curtis (1824–1892), hose biography appears elsewhere in the present olume. This mention of his name may serve us in aking the transition from New England to New ork, going by way of Connecticut in order to con- der two writers who made their homes in that State.

Donald Grant Mitchell (1822–1909), dear to the outh of the middle nineteenth century, and still a vorite with readers in the sentimental stage of de-

velopment, claims a place among American essayists as the "Ik Marvel" who wrote "Reveries of a Bachelor" (1850) and "Dream Life" (1851). He wrote other books, some before, and many after, but those two are the only ones that retain their hold upon the public, with the possible exception of "My Farm of Edgewood." Mitchell was a Yale graduate, and lived a roving life for several years, spending much time abroad, and serving for a short period as United States consul at Venice. In 1855, he purchased the farm just outside of New Haven which was his home for the remaining years—more than half a century—of his life. Besides the books already named, mention may be made of "Wet Days at Edgewood" (1864), "Rural Studies" (1867), "Bound Together" (1884), and "English Land, Letters, and Kings" (1889). Born early enough to be numbered among Irving's friends, he lived long enough to find himself almost the oldest of old-fashioned American writers, yet a writer who renewed his following from generation to generation.

Charles Dudley Warner (1829–1900) was a native of Massachusetts, and afterwards described his early life and farm surroundings in "Being a Boy," which is one of our classics in its kind. At thirteen he removed to a New York country town, fitted for college, and in 1851 was graduated from Hamilton. Then he studied law, gave lectures, spent two years

on the frontier (in Missouri!), was married, and settled in Chicago for the practice of law. In 1860, he removed to Connecticut to become the associate of his friend Joseph R. Hawley in editing the Hartford "Press," afterwards the "Courant." Both the home and the newspaper connection were retained for his forty remaining years, although his activities became greatly widened and diversified, and his journeyings were frequent and extensive. His first book was made up from his newspaper sketches, and entitled "My Summer in a Garden" (1870). It revealed the writer as an essayist of the authentic line, a worthy successor of Irving and fellow craftsman of Curtis, with an infusion of humor quite his own. Warner was forty when he thus entered the field of literature, but the fluency of his pen soon made up for the lost time, and upwards of a score of books stand to his credit. Those which may fairly be ascribed to the essayist include "Saunterings" (1872), "Backlog Studies" (1872), "Baddeck, and that Sort of Thing" (1874), "In the Wilderness" (1878), "As We Were Saying" (1891), and "As We Go" (1893). In the same category, although less strictly, come his half-dozen books of travel in the old world and the new. He also wrote biographies of Captain John Smith and Washington Irving, collaborated with his neighbor "Mark Twain" in "The Gilded Age," and was the author of a connected

series of three novels concerned with the feverish social and business life of the metropolis. He conducted the "Editor's Drawer" in "Harper's Magazine," and edited the "American Men of Letters" series and "A Library of the World's Best Literature." Besides doing all this literary and editorial work, he found time to engage actively in many civic enterprises and reforms, and made himself a force in the discussion of such subjects as schools, charities, and penal institutions. He would have been made the subject of a full length biographical portrait in the present volume had adequate materials been available; lacking them, the foregoing sketch must suffice.

We now pass to a group of essayists associated chiefly with the intellectual life of New York. Here again, as in the case of the Boston-Cambridge group, we find a number of writers who were poets first, and essayists afterwards, which precludes anything more than the mention of their names for the sake of making the record complete. These writers are Walt Whitman (1819–1892), Richard Henry Stoddard (1825–1903), Bayard Taylor (1825–1878), and Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833–1908).

Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819–1881) was born in Massachusetts, and in his early years was associated with the Springfield "Republican." Writing under the name of "Timothy Titcomb," he became widely

popular as an exponent of the domestic virtues and as a friendly household counselor. His "Letters to Young People" (1858), "Gold Foil" (1859), "Lessons in Life" (1861), and "Plain Talks on Familiar Subjects" (1865) were books that found their way into almost every home. In 1870, he removed to New York, becoming the editor of the newly-founded "Scribner's Monthly." Two volumes of "Every-Day Topics" (1876, 1882) represent his later work as an essayist of the commonplace. His popularity extended to the long poems and irreproachable novels that he also put forth in considerable numbers.

Richard Grant White (1821–1885), a New Yorker to the manner born, occupied for many years a post in the public service, and devoted his leisure to writing books and magazine articles. He was a Shaksperian student of usefulness and authority in his day, and a stern defender of good usage in English speech. Dogmatic, combative, and sometimes cynical, he offered an efficacious antidote to the sentimentality prevailing in popular literature. Aside from his studies of Shakspere, he was the author of a humorous satire on the Civil War, entitled "The New Gospel of Peace according to St. Benjamin" (1863-1866), collections of essays on "Words and Their Uses" (1870), and "Every-Day English" (1880), a work on "England Without and Within" (1881), and "The Fate of Mansfield Humphreys"

(1884), a novel in form, but in fact a pungent satire upon the American vulgarian in English society. White rode his several hobbies with unyielding determination, pricked many bubbles with his lance, and exerted a tonic influence upon American letters.

William Winter (1836—), born in Massachusetts and educated at Harvard, drifted to New York in his early manhood, and became associated with the "Tribune" as dramatic critic, a post which he continued to occupy for upward of forty years. His early books were volumes of verse, and it was not until he was past forty that he found his gait as an essayist. A first visit to England in 1877 seems to have provided the needed stimulus, and was described in "The Trip to England" (1879). Other volumes of prose, always graceful, sometimes oversentimental, and sometimes rising to the height of old-fashioned eloquence, followed in rapid succession. Among them are "English Rambles" (1883), "Shakespeare's England" (1886), "Gray Days and Gold" (1892), "Old Shrines and Ivy" (1892), and "Shadows of the Stage" (1892–1893). He also wrote memoirs of Henry Irving, Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, and Richard Mansfield. As a writer upon the stage, he has distinguished himself as a champion of the old order in things dramatic, and as the uncompromising foe of modernism, both in acting and in dramatic composition.

John Burroughs (1837—) is second only to Thoreau in American literature as an essayist concerned chiefly with the study of nature. Like Thoreau also, he humanizes his work with a blend of bookish culture and sage musings upon social welfare. He was born in the Catskill region of New York, went without a college education, taught school for a number of years, was a treasury clerk in Washington from 1864 to 1873, and for eleven years thereafter an examiner of national banks. In 1874, he bought a farm on the Hudson, at a point now known as West Park, named the place Riverby, built a stone house largely with his own hands, and went into the cultivation of fruit. Both the residence and the occupation have claimed him ever since, except for his occasional journeyings, which have ranged from England to California. The following volumes make up the bulk of his literary output: "Wake Robin" (1871), "Winter Sunshine" (1875), "Birds and Poets" (1877), "Locusts and Wild Honey" (1879), "Pepacton" (1881), "Fresh Fields" (1884), "Signs and Seasons" (1886), "Indoor Studies" (1889), "Riverby" (1894), "The Light of Day" (1898), "Squirrels and Other Fur Bearers" (1900), and "Literary Values." He was from the first an enthusiastic adherent of the Whitman cult; his earliest publication was the "Notes on Walt Whitman" of 1867, and in 1896 he published an extended study of the poet.

His occasional papers on literary topics treat of the larger aspects of literature as related to life, and are anything but academic in method. These papers count for much less than his nature-essays, which are always the record of direct and minute observation, intimate in sympathy, and loving in touch.

Hamilton Wright Mabie (1845—), born in rural New York, was educated at Williams and Columbia. He first attempted the law, but did not like it, and was glad to accept an invitation to join the staff of "The Christian Union." That weekly, which many years ago changed its name to "The Outlook," has claimed Mr. Mabie's services ever since, and most of his essays have first appeared in its pages. "Norse Stories Retold from the Eddas" (1882) was his first book; among its many successors are "My Study Fire" (1890, 1894), "Under the Trees and Elsewhere" (1891), "Short Studies in Literature" (1891), "Essays in Literary Interpretation" (1892), "Nature and Culture" (1897), "Books and Culture" (1897), "Work and Culture" (1898), "The Life of the Spirit" (1899), "William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man" (1900), "Works and Days" (1902), and "Parables of Life" (1902). In all these books he has preached the gospel of culture in a very broad sense, emphasizing the power and beauty of the great writers and the importance to the individual of finding in them a cherished personal possession.

This gospel he has also spread abroad by word of mouth, traveling all over the country as a lecturer, and charming countless audiences by his graceful and eloquent discourse. His work as an essayist and public speaker in some ways suggests that of Curtis, although he has been much less conspicuous as a publicist, and the range of his interests is not as broad. He makes his peaceful home in Summit, New Jersey, as Curtis made his on Staten Island.

As we have found it necessary to relegate the biographies of several of the most important American essayists to the volumes which deal with the poets, so to the volumes which deal with the novelists we must leave still another group of men. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) belongs among the essayists by virtue of many of the sketches found in the volumes of his tales, and of "Our Old Home," besides the three collections of passages from his American and foreign note-books. William Dean Howells (1837—) has in preëminent degree the qualities that go to the making of the typical essayist, and his collected works include more than a dozen volumes of essay-writing in the strictest sense—sketches of travel, literary criticism, and social philosophy. Henry James (1843—) is also, although less voluminously, an essayist of the highest distinction.

As the principal writer of the South, Edgar Allan

Poe (1809–1849), whether he be classed primarily as poet or as story-teller, must also be reckoned with as an essayist of much esthetic significance, and a similar statement must be made concerning Sidney Lanier (1842–1881), the southern writer next to Poe in importance. Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), a southerner by accident, was wholly an essayist, and as such, calls for more extended biographical mention. He was born in the Ionian Islands, of Irish and Greek parentage, and lived for many years in New Orleans. He made his home for a time in New York, and then went to Japan for permanent residence, becoming a subject of the Mikado. His books include "Stray Leaves from Strange Literature," "Some Chinese Ghosts," "Two Years in the French West Indies," "Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan," "Out of the East," "Reveries and Studies in New Japan," "Kokoro," "Gleanings in Buddha-Fields," "Exotics and Retrospectives," "In Ghostly Japan," "Shadowings," and "A Japanese Miscellany." He is a unique figure in our literature, and no other American writer (if we may call him that) has so interpreted for us the very soul of the East, and expressed its modes of thought in such classically beautiful language.

The writers thus far mentioned were all born before the middle of the nineteenth century, which might well be taken as a convenient, if arbitrary

stopping-place for the present sketch. To make a selection from the throng of younger and more nearly contemporary essayists is an invidious task, and any appraisal of their work would now be too provisional to be worth attempting. If the time-limit of birth set above be extended to 1860, so as to include men now fifty years of age and upwards, our outline-history of this literary species would be made to include a good many writers recently in the public eye. Somewhat at random, the following names and selected titles may be offered: William Crary Brownell (1851—), author of "French Traits," "French Art," "Victorian Prose Masters," and "American Prose Masters"; Brander Matthews (1852—), author of "The Theatres of Paris," "French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century," "Pen and Ink," "Americanisms and Briticisms," "Studies of the Stage," "Aspects of Fiction," "Parts of Speech," and "The Development of the Drama"; Henry Van Dyke (1852—), author of "The Poetry of Tennyson," "Little Rivers," and "Fisherman's Luck." Barrett Wendell (1855—), author of "Stelligeri and Other Essays Concerning America," "William Shakespeare," "A Literary History of America," "Liberty, Union, and Democracy," "The France of To-day," and "The Privileged Classes"; George Edward Woodberry (1855—), author of "Studies in Letters and Life," "Heart of Man," "Makers of Litera-

ture," "National Studies in American Letters," "The Torch," "Great Writers," and "The Appreciation of Literature"; Samuel McChord Crothers (1857—), author of "The Gentle Reader," "The Pardoner's Wallet," and "By the Christmas Fire." Henry Blake Fuller (1857—), author of "The Chevalier of Pensieri-Vani" and "The Chatelaine of La Trinité";[1] Agnes Repplier (1859—), author of "Books and Men," "Points of View," "Essays in Miniature," "Essays in Idleness," "In the Dozy Hours," and "Varia"; and Bliss Perry (1860—), author of "A Study of Prose Fiction" and "The Amateur Spirit." Although nothing more than a select catalogue has now been attempted, an inspection of the above titles will show that some of them, at least, could not properly be omitted from the briefest history of the American essay.

In closing this historical survey, the remark may be made that whatever sins of omission are charged against it will be found assignable to one of two causes. The names not mentioned are either those of writers whose major importance is found in some other field of literary activity, their work as essayists being relatively inconsiderable, or of writers who,

[1] At this point the writer should have included William Morton Payne (1858—), author of "Little Leaders," "Editorial Echoes," "Various Views," and "The Greater English Poets of the Nineteenth Century." —EDITOR.

although adopting the form of the essay, have made it the vehicle of scholarship or used it for the furtherance of some didactic purpose instead of aiming at an essentially literary effect. The essays which we read for the purpose of gaining specific knowledge, as for the purpose of shaping our judgment upon controverted subjects, perform a useful function in the intellectual economy, but their authors are not of the company of Montaigne and Addison and Emerson. Charm of diction and mellowness of thought are what make the essay, and these qualities may invest even a slender theme with the attributes of the most exquisite literary art.

Washington Irving

Sunnyside Dec. 15th 1851

WASHINGTON IRVING

I

THE life of Washington Irving almost spans the interval between the American Revolution and the Civil War. He was born in the city of New York, April 3, 1783, less than two years after the British surrender at Yorktown, and he died November 28, 1859, less than two years before the bombardment of Fort Sumter. At the time of his birth, America had produced almost no literature of the sort that is read for the enjoyment of its inherent charm; when he died, nearly all the writers whom we most love and honor had firmly established the foundations of their fame. Of all our men of letters, he was the first to write books that won admiration in both America and England, and that now, in the twentieth century, still find hosts of delighted readers on both sides of the Atlantic. He was our first notable humorist, our first graceful essayist and story-teller, almost our first biographer and historian. His life, moreover, was no less admirable than his literary achievement, and his personality was as lovable as his books.

The subject of this biography was the youngest of

eleven children born to William and Sarah Irving. His father, a native of the Orkneys, a Scotchman of the most reputable ancestry, became a sailor, and during the Seven Years' War was a petty officer on an armed British packet plying between Falmouth and New York. He married Sarah Sanders, a young woman of Cornwall, in 1761, and two years later, after the Peace of Paris had been concluded, he determined to forsake the sea and seek his fortunes in the New World. The pair landed in New York July 18, 1763, and William Irving entered upon a mercantile career. He became fairly successful, but the outbreak of the Revolution put an end to his prosperity, and the threatened occupation of New York by the British forced him to escape with his family into New Jersey. Two years later, finding himself no better off than before, he returned to New York, then in possession of the British forces, and partly destroyed by fire. A Whig in his sympathies, he did much (with the aid of his warm-hearted wife) to help the unfortunate Americans then held in confinement, and one of them, a Presbyterian minister, described him in a written testimonial as one who was "friendly inclined to the liberties of the United States, and greatly lamented the egregious barbarities practiced by her enemies on the unhappy sons of liberty that unhappily fell in their power." This certificate was given with the idea that it might

be useful to the philanthropic merchant in case of a possible imputation of disloyalty, and was signed just before Evacuation Day.

When General Washington took possession of New York, November 25, 1783, his infant namesake was, as we have seen, a little more than six months old. Six years later, when Washington again came to New York, to take his oath of office as President of the United States, a Scotch maid-servant of the Irving family called the attention of the chief magistrate to the youthful namesake who was to become his biographer. Taking the child with her, she followed Washington into a shop one morning, and said: "Please, your honor, here's a bairn was named after you." The great man patted the boy on the head, and the incident was closed.

The family life of the boy seems to have been fairly happy. His father was a Calvinist of the rigid old school, who had serious views about the bringing up of children, and was strong on church-going, the catechism, and family prayers. His mother, who had been raised in the more humanizing atmosphere of the Church of England, served to mitigate the severity of the paternal discipline, and freely displayed the sympathy which the father held it his duty to suppress. Washington was well supplied with brothers and sisters, four of the former and three of the latter, all growing up together in the

household. He was a normal sort of boy, lively in spirit, inclined to a little innocent mischief, and not too good to make occasional surreptitious visits to the theater. His schooling was desultory and produced little effect upon him. It ended before he was sixteen, but he made up for his scholastic deficiencies by much reading, and he had the passionate delight in books which characterizes most boys who are predestined to become distinguished men of letters. "Robinson Crusoe," "The Arabian Nights," and "Orlando Furioso" (in Hoole's translation) were among his favorites, and he read them, openly by day, and furtively at night, when he was supposed to be asleep. His fondness for the theater led him to write a play at the age of thirteen. This precocious work has vanished, and in after years the author could not even remember its title. His biographer dryly observes: "It is fair to presume it had great dramatic demerit."

At sixteen, Irving entered a law office, instead of joining his brothers at Columbia College. For the next five years (1799–1804) until he became of age, he was supposed to be studying his profession, but he seems to have taken its duties very lightly. His health was delicate, and not much was expected of him in the way of application to study. Instead of poring over law-books, he read good literature, and instead of tying himself down in New York, he

made excursions up the Hudson; in one case he went as far as Montreal in his journeyings. These outings were significant for his literary future. Writing of them a half-century later, he said: "It has been my lot, in the course of a somewhat wandering life, to behold some of the rivers of the Old World, most renowned in history and song, yet none have been able to efface or dim the pictures of my native stream thus early stamped upon my memory. My heart would ever revert to them with a filial feeling, and a recurrence of the joyous associations of boyhood; and such recollections are, in fact, the true fountains of youth which keep the heart from growing old." The only other noteworthy happening of Irving's life during his five years as an idle law student is found in his first appearance in print. His brother Peter established a newspaper, the "Morning Chronicle," in 1802, and Irving wrote for it a series of letters, or essays, humorous and satirical in vein, which he signed "Jonathan Oldstyle." They are interesting as foreshadowing the "Salmagundi" papers of five years later, but of small value on their own account.

II

When Irving came to his majority in the spring of 1804, the condition of his health was so alarming that his brothers determined to send him to Europe.

He seemed to be threatened with tuberculosis, and his appearance was such that the captain of the vessel in which he embarked said to himself, on sight of his passenger: "There's a chap who will go overboard before we get across." Fortunately, this dismal prediction came to naught, for his health steadily improved, and he was able to extract the full measure of enjoyment from his wanderings. He landed at Bordeaux near the end of June, and learned that the Consul Bonaparte had been proclaimed Hereditary Emperor of the French. He remained in Europe a year and a half—long enough to give an account in one of his last letters before starting homeward, of the victory of Trafalgar and the death of England's great captain. His itinerary took him, successively, to Paris, Marseilles, Nice, Genoa, Sicily, Naples, Rome, Milan, Paris again, the Netherlands, and London. He saw a great deal of many kinds of life, and stored his memory with images that subsequently had many reflections in his writings.

Traveling in Europe was then by no means the tame and comfortable affair that it has become in our own day. The stage-coach and the sailing vessel were the only means of transportation, and the tourist industry had not come into existence. A traveler in France and Italy was likely to have some exciting experiences in those days of Napoleonic

warfare, and a traveler whose language was English became an object of peculiar suspicion. The sea was quite as productive of adventures as the land, for pirates were a real danger, and Irving had his share of acquaintance with them in the Mediterranean. His particular pirates boarded the vessel that was taking him from Genoa to Messina, and pretended to be commissioned with letters of marque, inspecting the ship's papers with due formality, and giving a receipt for their plunder, in the shape of an order on the British consul at Messina. It was an unprofitable raid, for there were no valuables in the ship's cargo and Irving personally lost nothing. Perhaps this exemption was due to the impression made by his many letters of introduction, which the ruffians examined, finding them addressed to the governor of Malta and other influential persons. If the pirates were not genuine, they at least looked their part, as may be seen from this description: "A more villainous-looking crew I never beheld. Their dark complexions, rough beards, and fierce black eyes scowling under enormous bushy eyebrows, gave a character of great ferocity to their countenances. They seemed to regard us with the most malignant looks, and I thought I could perceive a sinister smile upon their countenances, as if triumphing over us who had fallen so easily into their hands."

Previous to this experience, our traveler had suffered a good deal of annoyance from inquisitive officials who were difficult to satisfy in the matter of passports. There was a delay of more than a month at Nice on this score, and much chafing under the restraint. When red tape had done its worst, he was at last permitted to proceed to Genoa, where he met an old comrade, and was made free of the delightful society of the ancient city. He met many agreeable people, and was presented to the Doge. It was during his stay in Genoa that he received news of the death of Hamilton, whose slayer he was afterwards to assist in defending. "I sicken when I think of our political broils, slanders, and enmities," he wrote at that time, "and I think, when I again find myself in New York, I shall never meddle any more in politics."

After the adventure with the pirates, two months were spent in Sicily, although, to be quite accurate, we must deduct three weeks of quarantine before the ship's passengers were permitted to go ashore at Messina. The appearance of Nelson's fleet in the harbor, in chase of the elusive Villeneuve, was an interesting spectacle soon offered to his view. At Syracuse, he explored the Ear of Dionysius, tried to get "a sly peep" at the nuns in the convents, and was disheartened at the aspect of the once prosperous city. "Streets gloomy and ill-built, and poverty,

filth, and misery on every side; no countenance displaying the honest traits of ease and independence; all is servility, indigence, and discontent." Catania came next, then Termini, then Palermo. It was carnival time, and the young traveler entered with zest into the festivities of the season. Finally, he embarked in a small fruit ship for Naples, not without trepidation, for Barbary cruisers were believed to be hovering about the coast, and the possibility of Tripolitan slavery was not a cheerful thing to contemplate.

Naples afforded Irving a spectacular performance on the part of Vesuvius, and an experience on the mountain which nearly brought upon him the fate of Pliny. Reaching Rome, he felt what so many thousands have felt, and found it impossible "to describe the emotions of the mind and the crowd of ideas that arise" when the pilgrim first walks the streets of the Eternal City. It was in Rome that he made the acquaintance of Washington Allston, than a young man of about his own age, and was so allured by the new friendship that he half made up his mind to turn painter and stay in Italy. He was received with surprising cordiality by the banker Torlonia, and afterward discovered that the warmth of his welcome had been caused by his Christian name, for his host had taken him to be a kinsman of the late President. He also met Madame de Staël in

Rome, and dining in her company one evening was much impressed by her voluble conversation and by the amazing number of the questions she put to him. After witnessing the ceremonies of Holy Week, he left Rome for Paris, stopping for a few days in Bologna and Milan. "There is no country where the prospects so much interest my mind, and awaken such a variety of ideas as in Italy"—this is the summing-up of his impressions of the land which is dearer than all others to artists and men of letters.

A stay of three months in London, reached by way of the Netherlands, ended Irving's first European sojourn. The letters of introduction to English society that had been procured for him unfortunately miscarried, which threw him to a certain extent upon his own resources. But there were the theaters, which he frequented no less assiduously than in Paris, and his correspondence makes judicious comment upon Kemble, and pays the tribute of glowing enthusiasm to Mrs. Siddons. It was at the theater one evening that the news came to him of Nelson's death in the hour of victory. January 18, 1806, he set sail for New York, reaching home after a stormy passage of sixty-four days, a passage not unattended with actual danger, for the ship had a narrow escape from wreck on the Long Island coast.

III

The nine years from 1806 to 1815 found Irving a resident of his native city, except for occasional visits to Albany, Philadelphia, Richmond, and Washington, and a brief experience as a staff officer of the Governor of New York toward the close of the war with England. These were also the years of "Salmagundi" and "A History of New York," which made him the most conspicuous figure in contemporary American letters. Viewed in a more personal light, they were the high-spirited years of early manhood and of a comparatively care-free existence spent in the company of kindred souls and filled with varied social diversions. Irving had returned from Europe in excellent health; his family was comfortably circumstanced; he felt the zest of living, and was prepared to make the most of his opportunities.

Incidentally, he resumed his study of the law, and was admitted to the bar after he had been at home something less than a year. He even sought an appointment to some small office, which, however, he did not secure. A Federalist in politics, at the time when the party was slowly but surely disintegrating, he actively expounded its interests in the spring election of 1807, only to be overwhelmed by the Republican tidal wave. "I got fairly drawn into

the vortex," he says, "and before the third day was expired, I was as deep in mud and politics as ever a moderate gentleman would wish to be; and I drank beer with the multitude; and I talked handbill-fashion with the demagogues, and I shook hands with the mob—whom my heart abhorreth." His sapient conclusion was to the effect that "this saving of one's country is a nauseous piece of business," and he made up his mind that he would have no more of it.

The fact that he was nominally a member of the legal profession, taken in connection with his brief political experiences, and his budding reputation as a writer, brought him a retainer for the defense in the case of Aaron Burr, who was awaiting trial in Richmond on the charge of treason. Though opposed to Burr in politics, he felt a certain sympathy for the man, the kind of sympathy aroused by the under dog in hearts that are swayed by sentiment as well as reason. He took no very active part in the trial, but he remained for a couple of months in Richmond, and visited Burr in the penitentiary to which he had somewhat brutally been consigned. The way in which Burr was treated excited Irving's indignation. "It is not sufficient that a man against whom no certainty of crime is proved should be confined by bolts, and bars, and massy walls in a criminal prison; but he is likewise to be cut off from

all intercourse with society, deprived of all the kind offices of friendship, and made to suffer all the penalties and deprivations of a condemned criminal. . . . Whatever may be his innocence or guilt, in respect to the charges alleged against him (and God knows I do not pretend to decide thereon) his situation is such as should appeal eloquently to the feelings of every generous bosom." These sentiments do credit to the writer's heart, and no special discredit to his intelligence.

The year of Burr's trial was also the year of "Salmagundi," a periodical after the fashion of "The Spectator" and its eighteenth-century imitators, projected by Irving in conjunction with his brother William, and J. K. Paulding, whose sister was William Irving's wife. There was a fine old-fashioned flavor about the expressed purpose of this venture, which was, as the paper declared, "to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age." This was to be done by means of "good-natured raillery," an expression which the ingenious compositor converted into "good-natured villainy," which unintended jest was so much to Irving's taste that he let the word stand without correction. "Salmagundi" lasted exactly one year, and twenty numbers were issued at irregular intervals. It met the popular fancy, and had a large circulation. It was also highly profitable as a busi-

ness undertaking, but not to its authors, for they had fallen into the hands of a canny publisher, who took care that most of the proceeds should remain in his own pocket. When he became dictatorial as well as avaricious, the trio of young writers brought the publication to an abrupt end. Bryant, after the author's death, wrote of the periodical in the following terms: "Its gaiety is its own; its style of humor is not that of Addison or Goldsmith, though it has all the genial spirit of theirs; nor is it borrowed from any other writer. It is far more frolicsome and joyous, yet tempered by a native gracefulness." Charles Dudley Warner, in his life of Irving, adduces evidence which would seem to concern him, as contributor and editor, with an ephemeral periodical of similar type, seven numbers of which were printed at Ballston-Spa during the following summer.

The death of Irving's father, in the fall of 1807, had clouded the gaiety of his life, and this bereavement was followed, a few months later, by the death of the married sister whose home was in the Mohawk valley, and whom Irving had visited on the occasion of his first voyage up the Hudson. In the spring of 1809 death again came very near to him, carrying away Matilda Hoffman, a daughter of Josiah Ogden Hoffman, with whose family Irving had been on terms of the closest intimacy ever since his entrance into Hoffman's office as a law clerk. The Hoffman

house had been a second home to him, and he had long cherished the hope that Matilda would become his wife. She died at the age of seventeen, and the world turned black to her lover. Writing many years afterwards, he said that the anguish of her loss "seemed to give a turn to my whole character, and throw some clouds into my disposition, which have ever since hung about it." Certain mementos of the loved one,—her Bible and Prayer Book, a miniature and a braid of hair—were cherished by Irving all the rest of his life, and he could never recall her memory without visible emotion.

Soon after the discontinuance of "Salmagundi," a new literary project engaged Irving's attention. Samuel Mitchill's ponderous "Picture of New York" had recently appeared, and Irving enlisted his brother Peter in the plan to write a burlesque of this book. But Peter left for Europe before the work had been put into any sort of shape, and Irving, left to carry it on alone, made considerable changes in the original plan, restricting its scope to the period of Dutch rule, and discarding much of the labored mock-pedantry of the notes that had been prepared. The work was well under way, when the death of Matilda interrupted its progress. Resuming his labors in the fall of 1809, the book was ready for the printer in November. It was to be published in Philadelphia, in order that it might take New York

more completely by surprise, but its forthcoming appearance was heralded by a series of mystifying announcements in the New York "Evening Post." These announcements created the legend of Diedrich Knickerbocker, who was described as "a small elderly gentleman, not entirely in his right mind," who disappeared from his New York lodgings, leaving an unpaid bill and the manuscript of "a very curious kind of a written book." It was intimated by his landlord that if the bill remained unsettled, he might have to satisfy himself by disposing of the manuscript. Having thus aroused a curious interest in advance, the book was published December 6, 1809, and appeared for sale in the shop windows. It was simply entitled "A History of New York," and dedicated to the New York Historical Society by a "sincere well-wisher and devoted servant, Diedrich Knickerbocker." The unwary public was completely taken in by these devices, and at first purchased the book in the natural belief that it was a work of sober erudition.

It did not take long for its true character to become generally known, and for its sales to increase rapidly in consequence of the discovery. And well might the public rejoice in the discovery, for American literature had never before produced a book so delightfully whimsical and so richly humorous as this pretended history of New York under its Dutch governors. It

won instant acclaim at home, and soon attracted attention abroad. Scott was greatly delighted with it, and spent several evenings reading it aloud to the members of his household, and describing it as written in the style of Swift with touches of Sterne. In this work we have amusing sketches of the aristocracy of the time, such as the Van Brummels, "the first inventors of Suppawn or mush and milk"; the Van Klotens, "horrible quaffers of new cider"; the Van Pelts, "mighty hunters of minks and muskrats"; the Van Nests of Kinderhook, "valiant robbers of birds' nests"; the Van Higginbottoms, "armed with ferules and birchen rods, being a race of schoolmasters"; the Van Grolls, "of Anthony's nose"; the Gardiniers, "robbers of watermelons and smokers of rabbits"; the Van Hoesens of Sing Sing, "great choristers and players upon the jews-harp"; the Couenhavens, "a jolly race of publicans"; the Van Kortlands, "great killers of ducks"; then the Van Winkles of Haerlem, "potent suckers of eggs, and noted for running horses, and for running up of scores at taverns. They were the first that ever winked with both eyes at once. Lastly came the Knickerbockers, of the great town of Schaghtikoke, where the folk lay stones upon the houses in windy weather, lest they should be blown away. These derive their name, as some say, from *Knicker*, to shake, and *Beker*, a goblet, indicating thereby that

they were sturdy toss-pots of yore; but, in truth, it was derived from *Knicker*, to nod, and *Boeken*, books: plainly meaning that they were great nodders or dozers over books." Some descendants of the old Dutch settlers, however, were incapable of enjoying such humor dispassionately. They found their own ancestors named (for Irving had taken his Dutch names at random) and held up to ridicule, and this hurt their feelings. One old lady in Albany wished that she were a man that she might horsewhip the offending author, whereupon Irving sought an introduction, and proved to be so agreeable in person that she forgot her indignation and became one of his warmest friends. The most striking evidence of the impression made by the book upon the general public is found in the fact that it firmly established the name Knickerbocker as a synonym for New Yorker in our common speech.

Unlike most authors who achieve a great popular success, Irving did not seek to force his reputation by further production. During the six years following, up to the time of his departure for Europe in 1815, his literary activities were restricted to a little desultory scribbling, done mainly in connection with a short-lived Philadelphia periodical, first called "Select Reviews," and afterwards "The Analectic Magazine." Irving took charge of this publication for a time (in 1813–1814) and wrote for it a number

of sketches, including brief biographies of the naval heroes of the war with England then being waged. Despite his unprecedented success he was by no means decided to devote himself henceforth to letters, which is not surprising when we consider that the profession may hardly be said to have existed at the time. Instead of further writing, he joined with two of his brothers in the importing business. This was somewhat risky in those days of embargos and blockades, and in consequence of this business we find him in Washington now and then working as a lobbyist. There was some talk of an appointment as Secretary of the Legation in France, where Joel Barlow was our Minister, but nothing came of it. He had a good time, as usual, on these business journeyings, and gave rather more attention to society and the theater than to politics.

Like most sober-minded Americans, Irving regretted the war with England, but when it was in progress, he became as patriotic as could be wished. "Whenever our arms come in competition with those of the enemy, jealousy for our country's honor will swallow up every other consideration—our feelings will ever accompany the flag of our country to battle, rejoicing in its glory, lamenting over its defeat." This view is by no means rational, nor does it embody the highest type of political morality, but it is the most comfortable view to adopt in time of conflict, and

Irving was doubtless sincere in holding it. It will be remembered that his particular friend, Stephen Decatur, was the man whose toast, "Our country, right or wrong!" at least did us the service of clearing the subject of cant, and exposing the bare atrocity of the view which it stated. The burning of the capital by the British in 1814 raised Irving's indignation to the boiling-point, and spurred him to seek an active part in the war. He offered his services to Governor Tompkins, and was at once appointed as aide, thereby becoming Colonel Washington Irving. In September he was detailed for duty in the defense of Sackett's Harbor, on Lake Ontario, supposed to be in danger of a British attack. Nothing came of this affair, however, and he was back in New York a fortnight later.

When the war with England was ended, we found a war with Algiers on our hands. Decatur was put in command of a squadron, and sent to bring the piratical Dey to terms. He asked Irving to go with him, which the latter agreed to do, almost on the spur of the moment. The departure of the squadron was delayed by the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba, but Irving, having once set his heart upon Europe, determined to go anyway, and embarked for Liverpool May 25, 1815, with hardly more than a summer excursion in mind. It was seventeen years before he again saw his native country.

IV

Irving went to Europe in the year of Waterloo and returned home in the year of the Reform Bill. The period of his foreign sojourn witnessed a remarkable development in American literature, for it established the fame of Bryant, Cooper, and Poe, to say nothing of such minor luminaries as Halleck, Drake, Percival, Sprague, and Simms. For Irving himself it was the meridian period of literary achievement, and to it belong "The Sketch-Book," "Bracebridge Hall," "Tales of a Traveller," "The Life and Voyages of Columbus," "The Conquest of Granada," "The Companions of Columbus," and "The Alhambra." These are the books upon which Irving's reputation chiefly rests, and the story of the years that produced them constitutes the most interesting part of his biography.

He landed in England at a very exciting time. The *Cent Jours* were nearly at an end, and almost the first sight to meet his gaze when he reached Liverpool was that of the laurel-decked mail-coaches dashing through the streets, spreading the news of Wellington's victory and the flight of Napoleon from the field of Waterloo. The same kindly sentiment which had made him, a few years earlier, if not a partisan of Aaron Burr, at least a sympathizer, now inspired him with pity for the defeated Corsican. "In spite

of all his misdeeds, he is a noble fellow, and I am confident will eclipse, in the eyes of posterity, all the crowned wiseacres that have crushed him by their overwhelming confederacy. If anything could place the Prince Regent in a more ridiculous light, it is Bonaparte suing for his magnanimous protection. Every compliment paid to this bloated sensualist, this inflation of sack and sugar, turns to the keenest sarcasm; and nothing shows more completely the caprices of fortune, and how truly she delights in reversing the relative situations of persons, and baffling the flights of intellect and enterprise—than that, of all the monarchs of Europe, Bonaparte should be brought to the feet of the Prince Regent."

Public affairs, however, had to give way at once to private interests in Irving's attention. His brother Peter was ill, and the business of the firm was in bad shape. Irving set himself to what proved the impossible task of straightening it out, and what he had intended to be a vacation jaunt turned out to be a matter of plodding and ungrateful industry. For nearly three years he struggled with accounts and credits, and then, realizing that their extrication from the entanglement was hopeless, the brothers applied for relief to the Commissioners of Bankruptcy. This was in the spring of 1818. A year before, when the skies had seemed brighter for a time, and when his brother had in a measure recov-

ered health, Irving was planning a return to America, when he received news of the death of his aged mother. This "put an end to one strong inducement that was continually tugging at my heart," he wrote, and he gave up the idea of leaving England "for the present."

Thrown upon his personal resources by the failure of the business, Irving seems to have made up his mind, about the beginning of 1818, to pursue literature as a profession. A new edition of the "Knickerbocker" history was demanded in New York, and for it his friends Allston and Leslie prepared a set of illustrations. Toward the end of the year, he was so committed in his resolutions to the new course of life that he declined the offer of an attractive position in the Navy Department at Washington. Confronted with the choice between an official post and the practical certainty of advancement, on the one hand, and the doubtful chances of a literary career, on the other, the decision was difficult, but it was finally made, although with misgivings that kept him in a state of mental disturbance for some months.

These misgivings did not wholly disappear until the following year, when the brilliant success of "The Sketch-Book" justified his determination. He had been at work upon this venture since the fall of 1818, and in the following March he sent the first

instalment of the work to America. "I have attempted," he wrote to his friend, Henry Brevoort, whom he had chosen as a literary representative, "no lofty theme, nor sought to look wise and learned, which appears to be very much the fashion among our American writers at present. I have preferred addressing myself to the feeling and fancy of the reader rather than to his judgment. My writings, therefore, may appear light and trifling in our country of philosophers and politicians; but if they possess merit in the class of literature to which they belong, it is all to which I aspire in the work. I seek only to blow a flute accompaniment in the national concert, and leave others to play the fiddle and French horn." The best commentary upon this modest statement of the writer's programme may be supplied by mentioning that "Rip Van Winkle" was a part of this first consignment of "copy."

The first number of "The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.," was copyrighted May 15, 1819, and published simultaneously in the four chief cities of the United States. The new pseudonym was as transparent a disguise as the earlier ones had been, and the identification of "Geoffrey Crayon" with "Diedrich Knickerbocker" and "Jonathan Oldstyle" was instant and complete. No less instant was the acclaim which greeted the new publication, and the chorus of critical praise swelled

steadily with the appearance of the successive numbers. There were seven of these numbers altogether, published during a period of sixteen months, each number including three or four sketches and tales. They richly deserved the praises that were heaped upon them, since they revealed a talent for leisurely description and reminiscence, for refined humor and delicate pathos, for the exploitation of the sentimental possibilities of their varied themes, which had hitherto had no exemplification in American literature. They had all the mellow charm of Addison and Goldsmith, yet they were by no means merely imitative of those eighteenth-century models, but offered instead a new illustration, based largely upon fresh material, of the literary *genre* which the earlier essayists had brought to such perfection of type.

For a time, Irving had no thought of an English edition of "The Sketch-Book," but when a London weekly reprinted some of the earlier papers, and it was rumored that a pirated reproduction of the entire work was in prospect, he set about arranging for an authorized publication. The book was offered to Murray, who politely declined the undertaking. It was then placed in the hands of a bookseller named Miller, who brought out a first volume, but soon thereafter failed in business. Murray was finally (through the friendly offices of Scott) per-

suaded to take it over, and in May, 1820, published a two-volume edition of the work. The second volume of this edition included two articles that had not appeared in the American series. The book met with a cordial reception, and in some quarters it was taken to be the work of Scott, again seeking to mystify the public under a new pseudonym. Its success encouraged Murray to add a hundred guineas to the stipulated honorarium, and to undertake, later in the same year, an English edition of the "Knickerbocker" history, which he called the "Don Quixote" or "Hudibras" of America.

This period of Irving's life was marked by the most brilliant social success. He made friends wherever he was introduced, and among the more distinguished men whom he came to know were Hallam, D'Israeli, Jeffrey, Gifford, Campbell, Southey, Milman, Foscolo, Belzoni, and Scott. His relation with Scott became especially intimate, and his letters give us many glimpses of his intercourse with that great writer and greater man. "He is a sterling golden-hearted old worthy, full of the joyousness of youth, with an imagination continually furnishing forth picture, and a charming simplicity of manner that puts you at ease with him in a moment." We have seen how Scott befriended him with Murray; further evidence of his esteem was provided in the form of an invitation to become the editor of an

Anti-Jacobin weekly to be published in Edinburgh. A handsome stipend was offered, but Irving, who now felt himself committed to authorship, and who disliked both politics and routine duties of any kind, was constrained to decline with grateful thanks.

In August, 1820, Irving left London for Paris, where he remained nearly a year. He made the acquaintance of Canning, of Talma (whose performance of "Hamlet" greatly impressed him), of Bancroft (then fresh from his Göttingen studies), of John Howard Payne (then very much down on his luck), and of "Anacreon" Moore. His acquaintance with Moore became intimacy, and the poet's journals give us many glimpses of the scenes which found them together. He says of Moore that he "has made me a gayer fellow than I could have wished; but I found it impossible to resist the charm of his society." Irving had brought his brother Peter with him on this visit to France, and had started him, at the cost of a heavy strain upon his own resources, in the business of managing a steamboat which was to ply upon the Seine. Leaving his brother, he returned to England in the summer of 1821 to be present at the coronation of the new king. On the eve of his departure from Paris, he was at Lord Holland's house, partaking of a farewell dinner, when Talma came in bringing the news of Napoleon's death at St. Helena.

The next year (1821–1822) was spent in England. An illness which depressed and almost crippled him made a life of seclusion imperative for a while, and he swallowed "draughts and pills enough to kill a horse" in his efforts to get the better of it. He was saddened by learning of the death, in November, of his oldest brother William, who had stood to his boyhood in an almost fatherly relation, being many years his senior. He kept on writing, nevertheless, and the result was "Bracebridge Hall," hurriedly prepared for the press early in 1822. It was published in May, making simultaneous appearance in New York and London. In the spring, his health was sufficiently improved to permit a resumption of social activity, and he passed pleasant days with Lady Spencer at Wimbledon, with "Anastasius" Hope at Deep Dene, with Moore (who had compounded with the government for the defalcation of his Bermuda agent) in London, and with Rogers, who invited him to the famous breakfasts. A letter to brother Peter gives an account of his strenuous life at this time. "I have been leading a sad life lately, burning the candle at both ends, and seeing the fashionable world through one of its seasons. The success of my writings gave me an opportunity, and I thought it worth while to embrace it if it were only for curiosity's sake. I have therefore been tossed about 'hither and thither and whither I would not';

have been at the levee and the drawing-room, been at routs, and balls, and dinners, and country-seats; been hand-and-glove with nobility and mobility, until, like Trim, I have satisfied the sentiment, and am now preparing to make my escape from all this splendid confusion."

In the middle of the summer of 1822, Irving set out for the Continent, and did not return to London for nearly two years. Germany was his first hunting-ground, and he made his way in leisurely fashion to Dresden, where he remained for several months. He took a roundabout route, and his chief stopping-places on the way were Aix-la-Chapelle, Mayence, Heidelberg, Munich, and Vienna. While in the Austrian capital he caught a glimpse of the King of Rome, a title which seems strangely ironical in the light of history. "The young Napoleon, or the Duke of Reichstadt, as he is called, is a very fine boy, full of life and spirit, of most engaging manners and appearance, and universally popular. He has something of Bonaparte in the shape of his head and the lower part of his countenance; his eyes are like his mother's."

Irving's Dresden sojourn found him almost completely restored to health. He entered with zest into the social life of the city, and made many new friends. One of them, long years afterwards, supplied his biographer with the following description: "He was

sought after by all in the best society, mingling much in the gay life of a foreign city, and a court where the royal family were themselves sufficiently intellectual to appreciate genius. . . . He was thoroughly a gentleman, not merely externally in manners and look, but to the innermost fibres and core of his heart. Sweet-tempered, gentle, fastidious, sensitive, and gifted with the warmest affections, the most delightful and invariably interesting companion, gay and full of humor even in spite of occasional fits of melancholy, which he was however seldom subject to when with those he liked—a gift of conversation that flowed like a full river in sunshine, bright, easy, and abundant."

This characterization has a peculiar interest to us, because the writer was a young woman with whom Irving's relations were very intimate. Her name was Emily Foster, and she was the daughter of an English family then living for a time in Dresden. Although the official biography by his nephew makes light of Irving's attachment for this girl, there is reason to believe that he sought her in marriage, and that his failure to win her was a deep although secret disappointment. The evidence upon which this belief is based is provided by the reminiscences and journals of the Fosters, published after his death. The journal of Emily Foster's sister contains an entry which it is difficult to dispute. "He has written.

He has confessed to my mother, as to a dear and true friend, his love for E———, and his conviction of its utter hopelessness. He feels himself unable to combat it. He thinks he must try, by absence, to bring more peace to his mind." It is a risky business for a susceptible young man to engage in private theatricals in company with the object of his affections, and it is even more risky to receive from her private instructions in the French language. Irving challenged fate in both these ways, and paid the usual penalty. The "absence" which he thought might "bring more peace to his mind" took the shape of a five weeks' tour in the country of the Riesengebirge. When he returned to Dresden, the Fosters were on the point of departing for their English home, and Irving went in their company as far as Rotterdam, where their ways parted, he taking a reluctant leave, and turning his footsteps toward Paris.

Irving remained for nearly a year in the French capital, renewing his old friendships, making some new ones, and leading a somewhat desultory life as far as literary production was concerned. He worked for some time with Payne, helping him with his own plays, and collaborating with him in the work of revamping French plays for the English stage. Galignani proposed the editing of a library of "British Classics," and made terms with Irving for his super-

vision of the undertaking, but it was soon abandoned, and a brief memoir of Goldsmith was the only piece of writing done in this connection. Meanwhile, a new collection of stories and essays was gradually being put together, and was offered to Murray in March, 1824. This project was the "Tales of a Traveller," which the publisher promptly accepted, and for which he agreed to make liberal payment. In consequence of this arrangement, the summer found Irving again in London, correcting proofs, and hurriedly preparing enough new matter to fill out the two volumes of the English edition. Murray brought out the work in August, and it was published in New York (in four parts) during the next few weeks. After seeing his book through the press, the author hurried back to Paris.

When he began to hear from his new publication, the reports were not wholly encouraging. The critics began to find fault with him, both in England and his native country. A discreetly anonymous friend in America took pains to clip the unkind notices, and see that the author was supplied with them. Irving was always unusually sensitive to adverse criticism, and fell into one of his despondent moods. A reflection of that mood may be seen in a letter written to one of his nephews who was feared to cherish literary aspirations. "I hope none of those whose interests and happiness are dear to me

will be induced to follow my footsteps, and wander into the seductive but treacherous paths of literature. There is no life more precarious in its profits and fallacious in its enjoyments than that of an author. I speak from an experience which may be considered a favorable and prosperous one; and I would earnestly dissuade all those with whom my voice has any effect from trusting their fortunes to the pen. For my part, I look forward with impatience to the time when a moderate competency will place me above the necessity of writing for the press." This passage must not be taken too seriously. Every occupation has its drawbacks as well as its advantages, and it is a common trait of human nature to magnify the former when reflecting upon one's own chosen calling. There are few people, however successful they may be, who do not at times look longingly at some other form of successful achievement, and imagine that they would have been happier in the field of endeavor thus contemplated. They see only the glamor which attends the fame of other men, and only the reverses and disappointments which seem to gather about their own.

Another year was spent in Paris, bearing no particular fruit. A life of Washington was proposed to Irving by Constable, whose failure soon thereafter put an end to any possible arrangements in that quarter. The notion of a series of "American

Essays" occupied the author's mind for a time, and he worked upon them at intervals, but they were abandoned for other undertakings, and consequently never saw the light. In September, 1825, Irving was curious about the vintage, and, still accompanied by brother Peter, went to Bordeaux. Here he remained four months, scribbling "American Essays" now and then, upon such subjects as our scenery, our national prejudices, and our treatment of the stranger within our gates. It was toward Spain that his thoughts had long been turning, and now that he found himself near the frontier, the lure was irresistible. Comparing Spain with Italy, he had, earlier in the year, written to his nephew in these terms: "I do not know anything that delights me more than the old Spanish literature. You will find some splendid histories in the language, and then its poetry is full of animation, pathos, humor, beauty, sublimity. The old literature of Spain partakes of the character of its history and its people; there is an oriental splendor about it. The mixture of Arabic fervor, magnificence, and romance, with old Castilian pride and punctilio; the chivalrous heroism, the immaculate virtue; the sublimated notions of honor and courtesy, all contrast finely with the sensual amours, the self-indulgences, the unprincipled and crafty intrigues, which so often form the groundwork of Italian story."

V

Alexander Everett was the American minister to Spain at this time, and Irving, who had met him the previous summer in Paris, had been promised a nominal connection with the legation, should he decide to visit the country. Spain being still in an unsettled condition, this official status would be useful as a protection to the traveler. Irving wrote to Everett from Bordeaux, recalling the promise, and asking for the appointment. In January, 1826, he received his papers, and with them a suggestion from Everett that the author might profitably employ himself with an English translation of Navarrete's forthcoming work upon the voyages of Columbus. This suggestion appealed to Irving, who in his reply agreed to undertake the work. The next month found him in Madrid, but an examination of Navarrete's work, which had just appeared, showed it to be far too formidably documented to please the general reader, and so, in place of its translation, Irving soon set about the preparation of an original biography of the great discoverer. The work thus laid out for him absorbed his energies for a year and a half, and in the summer of 1827, he had the satisfaction of seeing it completed, and of arranging with Murray for its publication. The price paid was three thousand guineas, the payments to be extended over

a period of two years, thus providing comfortably for the near future. Writing the biography proved to be very hard work, as the endless vistas of historical controversy revealed themselves to the investigator, and Irving toiled at the task night and day, permitting himself little recreation until it was completed.

"The Life and Voyages of Columbus" was published by Murray in four large volumes, while the American edition filled only three. The work did not appear until early in 1828. It has become the fashion for professional historians to speak slightingly of this biography, and doubtless the exacting scholarship of a later period could detect many flaws in the performance. Irving was a man of letters far more than he was a scholar, yet he was a fair scholar for the time in which he lived, and his work involved not a little of the more rigorous sort of investigation. Although based mainly upon secondary sources, it was also based in part upon the exploration of archives, the deciphering of documents, and the visiting of the scenes described. At all events, it supplied English readers for the first time with a comprehensive history of the life and voyages of the great Admiral of the Ocean Seas who laid the foundations of the Spanish Empire. Before its appearance, nothing more extensive than Robertson's summary sketch of the subject had been available to English

readers not conversant with Spanish, and Irving's work presented them with a liberal exposition of the learning of the Spanish historians, and presented it in a form so fascinating that it still provides the most attractive account of the subject in our language. While most noteworthy as a contribution to literature, it is by no means despicable as a historical treatise.

In the spring of 1828, the author, who had hitherto kept pretty close to Madrid, started upon the exploration of Andalusia. The stages of his journey were Cordova, Granada, Malaga, Gibraltar, Cadiz, and Seville. His brother Peter returned to France at this time, leaving him alone in Spain. Stories of robbers were rife, and the journey was attended by dangers that were not altogether imaginary, although they did not become realized. Writing from Granada Irving says, in humorous vein: "Our journey has hitherto been auspicious, that is to say, we have escaped being robbed, though we have been in dens as perilous as that of Daniel and the lions; our greatest risk, however, has, I am convinced, been from our own escort, which for part of the way has been composed of half-reformed robbers, retired from business, but who seemed to have a great hankering after their old trade." It was upon this journey that Irving first had sight of Granada and the Alhambra: "The evening sun shone gloriously upon its red towers as we approached it, and gave a mellow tone

to the rich scenery of the vega. It was like the magic glow which poetry and romance have shed over this charming place. . . . It is impossible to contemplate this delicious abode and not feel an admiration of the genius and the poetical spirit of those who first devised this earthly paradise."

Irving reached Seville in April, 1828, and wrote to his brother: "I shall probably remain here some weeks, till I can get the work we talked of in order for the press." The work mentioned was "The Conquest of Granada," which he had planned, and even begun, while in Madrid, and which he was now to continue with the fresh enthusiasm aroused by the scenes with which it was to deal. The stay of "some weeks" which he expected to make in Seville lengthened out into more than a year, enabling him to complete the new book, as well as to make the corrections necessary for a new edition of the "Columbus," and to prepare an abridgment of that biography in a single volume. This latter task was undertaken to frustrate the nefarious plans of an American pirate. The work was done under great pressure, the entire volume of about five hundred pages (largely rewritten) being prepared in nineteen days. The work had to go to New York by a particular boat if it were to get there in time to defeat the purpose of the "paltry poacher" who had made it necessary, and the author pressed into his service every man,

woman, and child of his acquaintance, who understood English, in Seville to help him copy the manuscript in time. This abridgement was given to Murray without charge, and had a large sale in England.

"A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada" was published in the spring of 1829. It purported to be the work of one "Fray Antonio Agapido," but Murray thought it better to insert the author's real name. Irving was indignant at this "unwarrantable liberty," because it represented him, in his character of chronicler, as telling "many round untruths." "Literary mystifications are excusable," he wrote, "when given anonymously or under feigned names, but are impudent deceptions when sanctioned by an author's real name." He describes the "Chronicle" as being "made up from all the old Spanish historians I could lay my hands on, colored and tinted by the imagination so as to have a romantic air, without destroying the historical basis or the chronological order of events. . . . I have depicted the war as I found it in the old chronicles, a stern, iron conflict, more marked by bigotry than courtesy, and by wild and daring exploits of fierce soldiery, than the gallant contests of courteous cavaliers."

A second visit to Granada, and a sojourn of nearly three months in the Alhambra, followed upon Irving's year in Seville, and filled his time up to the mid-

summer of 1829. This was a happy time indeed, for the Governor of the Alhambra, preferring himself to live in town, placed his quarters in the palace at Irving's disposal. Soon deserted by the companion who had accompanied him thither, he was left in sole possession for the period of his stay. The caretakers provided for his bodily comforts, and he was free to work and dream at his ease. He wrote to a nephew this account of his daily life. "I take my breakfast in the Saloon of the Ambassadors or the Court of the Lions; and in the evening, when I throw by my pen, I wander about the old palace until quite late, with nothing but bats and owls to keep me company. Little Dolores, the bright-eyed Spanish girl who waits upon me, cannot comprehend the pleasure I find in these lonesome strolls; as nothing would tempt her to venture down into the great dreary courts and halls of the palace after dark; and Matteo Ximenez, the ragged historian who brushes my clothes, is sadly afraid I am very melancholy."

Again and again do his letters recur to the delight of these summer days. Changing to another part of the palace, he writes of the new quarters as follows, "I never had such a delicious abode. One of my windows looks into the little garden of Lindaraxa; the citron-trees are full of blossoms and perfume the air, and the fountain throws up a beautiful jet of

water; on the opposite side of the garden is a window opening into the saloon of Los Dos Hermanos, through which I have a view of the Fountain of Lions and a distant peep into the distant halls of the Abencerrages. Another window of my room looks out upon the deep valley of the Darro, and commands a fine view of the Generalife. I am so in love with this apartment that I can hardly force myself from it to take my promenades. I sit by my window until late at night, enjoying the moonlight and listening to the sound of the fountains and the singing of the nightingales; and I have walked up and down the Chateaubriand gallery until midnight." This description may well excite the reader to an innocent envy which reaches its height when the following addition is made: "In one of the great patios or courts there is a noble tank of water, one hundred and twenty feet long and between twenty and thirty feet wide. The sun is upon it all day, so that at night it is a delightfully tempered bath, in which I have room to swim at large." Did ever another writer do his work under such ideal conditions!

The monotonous serenity of this idyllic existence was occasionally broken, now by the unexpected appearance of a nephew, now by the visit of a company of British officers, now by the society of the Duke de Gor or the Count de Luque—two gentle-

men in whose society Irving took much pleasure. The end of the dream came when he received news that the efforts of his friends had secured for him an appointment as Secretary of our Legation in England. Reluctantly, and more on account of the solicitations of those friends than of his own wishes, he bade farewell to his castle of indolence. "I have a thorough indifference to all official honors," he wrote to his brother, "and a disinclination for the turmoil of the world; yet having no reasons of stronger purport for declining, I am disposed to accord with what appears to be the wishes of my friends." And writing to Alexander Everett he said: "As the office has been unsought by me, so in accepting I shall have it clearly understood, that I mean to commit myself to no set of men or measures, but mean, as heretofore, to keep myself as clear as possible of all party politics, and to continue to devote all my spare time to general literature." Another reason for the reluctance with which he accepted the appointment was found in the fact that it postponed indefinitely a return to America which he had planned for the near future. More and more during the years of his self-imposed exile his country was tugging at his heartstrings and the desire to see it once more had become well-nigh irresistible.

The regret with which Irving took leave of Spain is voiced in these words: "A residence of between

three and four years in it has reconciled me to many of its inconveniences and defects, and I have learned more and more to like both the country and the people." In the way of literary work, he took back with him to England the finished manuscripts of "The Voyages of the Companions of Columbus," "The Legends of the Conquest of Spain," and the manuscript of "The Alhambra" well on its way toward completion. He reached London by way of Paris, traveling for several weeks, by slow stages, in September, 1829. He found his diplomatic chief, Lewis McLane, suffering from illness, which put the ceremonial business of the legation upon his untried shoulders. New honors awaited him in England. The gold medal of the Royal Society of Literature was voted him, and Oxford offered him, "against the stomach of my sense," the degree of Doctor of Laws. The ceremony of bestowal was, however, delayed until 1831, on account of the death of the King. In the summer of 1830, Irving made a brief visit to Paris, and witnessed some of the after-scenes of the July Revolution. Early in 1831, "The Voyages of the Companions of Columbus" was published. In the summer of that year, McLane was recalled to take a seat in the Cabinet, and Van Buren was sent to England in his place. During the interim. Irving was temporarily elevated to the rank of Chargé d'Affaires, but as soon as his new chief ar-

rived he seized what seemed to be a suitable opportunity to retire from the legation.

It was at this time that Irving saw Scott, who was stopping in London on his way to Italy, for the last time. The interview was pathetically affecting. "At dinner, amid the conversation of the others, his mind would occasionally gleam up, and he would strike in with some story in his old way; but the light would soon die out, and his head would sink, and his countenance fall as he saw that he had failed in giving point to what he was telling." A few weeks following this meeting were pleasantly occupied by a round of country visits, including a pilgrimage to Newstead Abbey. Early in 1832, Irving was asked to secure an English publisher for the new volume of Bryant's poems, and was at considerable pains to perform the service for his American fellow-craftsman. It was a bad time for book-publishing, on account of the reform agitation and a threatened epidemic of cholera, but Irving offered the bait of an introduction in the shape of a long dedicatory letter to Rogers, and a publisher was found. The depressed condition of the book trade also put difficulties in the way of his own "Alhambra," but the arrangements for its publication were at last made, and the author found himself free to prepare for the journey home, so long cherished in anticipation, and so many times unex-

pectedly delayed. He sailed from Le Havre April 11, 1832, and landed in his native city after a voyage of forty days' duration.

VI

When Irving took his leave of the Old World, after the seventeen years of rich experience and fruitful toil which he had spent abroad, he was just entering upon his fiftieth year. The America which he had left had still been ruled by the line of statesmen-presidents; the America to which he now returned was controlled by the spirit of Jacksonian democracy. His native city of New York had doubled in population, its waters were crowded with shipping, and what had been its waste places were now the haunts of industry and the sites of newly-erected buildings. Literary fellowship was also awaiting him, for he was no longer our only man of letters, and this was more pleasing than all the rest to the man whose thoughts were never tinged by professional jealousy, who derived no less a pleasure from the success of his brother workers than he did from his own.

Soon after his arrival, he had to endure what was to him the severe ordeal of a public dinner of welcome. "I look forward to it with awe," he wrote, "and shall be heartily glad when it is over." It

took place at the City Hotel, and there were about three hundred guests, with Chanceller Kent as toast-master. He was called the "Dutch Herodotus," with other titles of affection and esteem, and could not escape from making a speech of acknowledgment. The question had been raised as to whether he could be content to live in America after so long an estrangement, and he expressed himself in these terms: "I come from gloomier climes to one of brilliant sunshine and inspiring purity. I come from countries lowering with doubt and danger, where the rich man trembles, and the poor man frowns—where all repine at the present and dread the future. I come from these, to a country where all is life and animation; where I hear on every side the sound of exultation; where every one speaks of the past with triumph, the present with delight, the future with growing and confident anticipation. Is this not a community in which one may rejoice to live? Is this not a city by which one may be proud to be received as the son? Is this not a land in which one may be happy to fix his destiny, and his ambition—if possible—to found a name? I am asked how long I mean to remain here. They know but little of my heart or my feelings who can ask me this question. I answer, as long as I live." At this point, the cheering was so loud, and the speaker was so surprised with himself at having done so well, that

he brought his remarks to a close. He had intended to say a great deal more, but felt that it would be tempting Providence to continue after that outburst of applause.

"The Alhambra," the manuscript of which had preceded his own arrival, was published in two volumes, June 9, 1832, in Philadelphia. It appeared in England, and also in a French translation, at about the same time. It was hailed as a worthy successor to "The Sketch-Book," and the reviews were almost unanimous in its praise. When it appeared, Irving was in Washington, visiting his former diplomatic chief, now Secretary of the Treasury. He called on the President, who seemed to him to have "a little dash of the Greek," besides being the "old Roman" of his admirers, to be *knowing* as well as *honest*. He thanked Jackson for the appointment of three years earlier, and at the same time made it clear that he had no further ambition to occupy a public office.

On his return from the capital, Irving started on a course of travel which, intended at first for a summer jaunt, grew through unforeseen circumstances into an extensive Western journey, lasting until winter. Its first stage took him up the Hudson to some places that were familiar, and others that were new. This was his first visit to the Catskills, for the description of that region in "Rip Van Winkle"

had been only imagined. He found with delight that the scenes of Rip's adventures had been identified, and were all ticketed for the instruction of tourists. It was suggested that the bones of Rip's dog would probably be unearthed by some future discoverer. Boston, the White Mountains, and Saratoga, were next visited, and then Trenton Falls, as part of a plan for exploring western New York. Meeting on this journey Mr. Ellsworth, one of the Commissioners appointed to treat with certain Indian tribes, he accepted an invitation to go with the Commission to its objective point far up the Arkansas River. The course followed was by way of Cincinnati and Louisville to St. Louis, then by horseback across the plains to Fort Gibson, Arkansas, and the wilderness beyond. Of the month spent in this wilderness, he wrote: "Our tour was a very rough, but a very interesting and gratifying one, part of the time through an unexplored country. We led a complete hunter's life, subsisting upon the products of the chase, camping by streams or pools, and sleeping on skins and blankets in the open air; but we were all in high health; and, indeed, nothing is equal to such a campaign, to put a man in full health and spirits."

A roundabout journey by way of New Orleans and the Gulf and Atlantic States, brought Irving to Washington in December. This was the time of the

nullification agitation, and on his way through South Carolina, the governor's invitation to come again soon had been met with the suggestive reply: "I'll come with the first troops." The political outlook did not seem very bright to him. "I confess I see so many elements of sectional prejudice, hostility, and selfishness stirring and increasing in activity and acrimony in this country, that I begin to doubt strongly of the long existence of the general Union." The session of Congress following upon Jackson's nullification proclamation proved so attractive to Irving that he remained in Washington until its close. "I became so deeply interested in the debates of Congress that I almost lived in the capitol. The grand debate in the Senate occupied my mind as intensely for three weeks, as did ever a dramatic representation. I heard almost every speech, good and bad, and did not lose a word of any of the best. I think my close attendance on the legislative halls has given me an acquaintance with the nature and operation of our institutions, and the character and concerns of the various parts of the Union, that I could not have learned from books for years." His opinion of the President, now observed at close range, is tersely given in the following sentence: "The more I see of this old cock of the woods the more I relish his game qualities."

During the remainder of the year 1833, Irving

kept moving briskly about. A stay in Baltimore delayed his return to New York, which he had hardly reached when he started south again to visit Fredericksburg and Charlottesville, and "had to fight off from an invitation to a public dinner" at the University of Virginia. New York, Saratoga, and the Catskills came next in his itinerary, then a carriage journey with Van Buren (whose stay in England had been brief, owing to the Senate's refusal to confirm his appointment) among the old Dutch settlements about New York, then a rapid move to Washington, and finally a return to New York with the intention of settling down to work. It was not without a purpose that these journeyings had been undertaken; the author was already planning a series of writings that should do for his own country what his earlier books had done for England and the Continent. "I am now getting at home upon American themes," he wrote toward the close of this year, "and the scenes and characters I have noticed since my return begin to assume a proper tone and form and grouping in my mind, and to take a tinge from my imagination."

The next year was spent quietly and industriously, to such effect that the author was able, during 1835, to publish the three volumes of "Crayon Miscellanies." This plan was adopted "to clear off all the manuscripts I have on hand, and to throw off

casual lucubrations concerning home scenes." His "Tour of the Prairies" filled the first volume; the second contained "Abbotsford" and "Newstead Abbey"; the third was made up of the "Legends of the Conquest of Spain," already mentioned as written several years before. All three volumes were published on advantageous terms in both America and England. They proved successful far beyond the author's modest expectation; his income from them, from the farming out of all his earlier works to his Philadelphia publishers, and from an abridgment of his "Columbus" for the use of schools, was sufficient to give him a fair prospect of easy times for the rest of his life. They would have been still easier had he been less generous to his brother Peter, and more cautious in the matter of speculative investments.

In the latter part of 1834, he was approached by John Jacob Astor, who was extremely desirous of having Irving write the history of his fur-trading enterprise, and his settlement of Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River. The subject appealed strongly to Irving, but he hesitated at thought of the preliminary drudgery it would mean for him. An enormous amount of work would have to be done in sifting the documentary material, and in procuring verbal accounts from the pioneers of the enterprise, before the preparation of a consecutive narrative

could begin. He solved this difficulty by enlisting the services of his nephew Pierre (his future biographer) for this dull routine work, and an arrangement satisfactory to all parties was made. When the material was put into shape for him to work upon it, he quartered himself in Astor's country house at Hell Gate, where he had for companions, besides the old gentleman, his nephew and the poet Halleck. The book was rapidly written, and was practically ready for publication by the close of 1835, although it did not appear until late in the following year. It had a particular success in England, on account of the novelty of its subject-matter, and "The Spectator" went so far as to call it the author's *chef d'œuvre:* "the most finished narrative of such a series of adventures that ever was written."

VII

The desire for a settled existence and a home now grew so strongly upon Irving that we find him, in the spring of 1835, negotiating for the purchase of a ten-acre farm on the Hudson. The spot chosen was close to Sleepy Hollow, about twenty-five miles up-stream on the left bank, opposite the point at which the Palisades begin to lose their precipitous character, and bordering upon the expansion of the river known as the Tappan Zee. There was already

small Dutch cottage, stone-built, upon the farm, nd this the author proceeded to enlarge into the omfortable dwelling which at first he called the Roost (Rest), and which in later years became nown by the name of Sunnyside. As the work of econstruction went on, he had the usual experience f finding that it was going to cost much more than ad been expected, and humorously expressed the ntention of writing "a legend or two about it and s vicinity, by way of making it pay for itself." He ad hoped to have the house ready for occupancy or the summer of 1836, but the work dragged, and he place was not really habitable before October. ts capacity for running up expenses caused Irving o remark that "for such a small edifice it has a rodigious swallow, and reminds me of those little iry changelings called Killcrops, which eat and at, and are never the fatter." When at last he oved into it, he had for a housemate Peter Irving, ho had returned after an absence of twenty-seven ears to pass his remaining days in America. Other habitants of the place were a sociable cat named mp, a pig "of first-rate stock and lineage named anny," and a flock of geese. At holiday time he rites contentedly that "everything goes on cheerily my little household, and I would not exchange the ttage for any chateau in Christendom."

The winter of 1836–1837 found Irving at work

upon "The Adventures of Captain Bonneville," which was published in the spring, and may be regarded as a sort of sequel to "Astoria." Bonneville was an officer of the United States army who had spent many years in the far West, and had a great variety of experiences with trappers and hunters and Indians in the Rocky Mountain regions. Irving found him at work in Washington upon his maps and traveling notes, and proposed to purchase from him his manuscript material and fit it for publication. The offer was accepted and the work, combined with information and incident from a number of collateral sources, was made into a highly readable narrative.

Aside from the publication of this book, the year 1837 had few incidents worth being chronicled. There was a dinner given in New York to the bookselling trade, and Irving took occasion to propose a toast for "Samuel Rogers—the friend of American genius." This tribute was evoked by a letter received from Rogers the day before, in which Halleck's poems were described as "better than anything we can do just now on our side of the Atlantic." During this season the Roost had a visit from no less a personage than Louis Napoleon, who had been set free on the American shores from his imprisonment on a French man-of-war. This year was also one of the few occasions when Irving found his motives as

an author aspersed in the public prints, and was constrained to make a dignified defense. One of those self-constituted champions of Americanism who always take umbrage at any words of praise bestowed upon other nations, or any deference to their sentiments, complained that Irving had retouched one of Bryant's poems when he supervised them in their English edition, and that in presenting his own "Tour of the Prairies" to the English public, he had studiously omitted the *amor patriæ* of his American preface. The charges were too trivial to deserve much attention, and Bryant himself repudiated his over-zealous defender, but Irving thought it best to publish a statement of his motives, and to rebuke his assailant with some asperity. "Plain dealing, Sir, is a great merit, when accompanied by magnanimity, and exercised with a just and generous spirit; but if pushed too far, and made the excuse for indulging every impulse of passion or prejudice, it may render a man, especially in your situation, a very offensive, if not a very mischievous member of the community."

A nomination for Congress had been offered Irving, and declined, in 1834. In 1838, he writes, "I had a full deputation from Tammany Hall at the cottage, informing me that I had been unanimously and vociferously nominated as Mayor." What he thought about this proffered distinction may be inferred from

a letter in which he says: "I value my peace of mind too highly to suffer myself to be drawn into the vortex of New York politics; which, not to speak profanely, is a perfect Hell Gate." Van Buren's request that he should accept a Cabinet position, and become Secretary of the Navy, was a different matter, but even this honor he felt bound to put aside, partly because he felt that the duties of the office would make him "mentally and physically a perfect wreck," and partly because, although he regarded Van Buren with warm friendship, he was very far from being in sympathy with the policies of the administration.

The year which brought Irving these proffered distinctions brought also what was probably the greatest sorrow of his life. His brother Peter died in June, after a brief illness. Some extracts from a letter written three months afterward will serve to indicate how deeply this loss was felt. "Every day, every hour I feel how completely Peter and myself were intertwined together in the whole course of our existence. Indeed, the very circumstance of our both having never been married, bound us more closely together. . . . A dreary feeling of loneliness comes on me at times, that I reason against in vain; for, though surrounded by affectionate relatives, I feel that none can be what he was to me; none can take so thorough an interest in my concerns; to none

can I so confidingly lay open my every thought and feeling, and expose every fault and foible, certain of such perfect toleration and indulgence. . . . My literary pursuits have been so often carried on by his side, and under his eye—I have been so accustomed to talk over every plan with him, and, as it were, to think aloud when in his presence, that I cannot open a book, or take up a paper, or recall a past vein of thought, without having him instantly before me, and finding myself completely overcome." The lonesomeness of the Roost, thus bereft, was in a measure, however, relieved by Ebenezer Irving, who took up his residence there, bringing with him his five daughters.

In the fall of 1838, after he had in a way recovered the use of his faculties, Irving started to work out a plan that he had long cherished. It was a "History of the Conquest of Mexico" that was now begun, and some three months of fairly solid work had been put upon it when he learned that Prescott was making preparations for a work upon the same subject. He at once relinquished the plan in favor of the younger historian, an act of altruism not often paralleled in the annals of authorship. He at the same time offered Prescott his help, and the use of what materials he had at hand. "In at once yielding up the theme to you," he wrote, "I feel that I am but doing my duty in leaving one of the most magnificent

themes in American history to be treated by one who will build up from it an enduring monument in the literature of our country."

That the impulsive act thus prompted by his native generosity involved a considerable sacrifice—a greater sacrifice than Prescott would have been likely to accept had he understood it—appears from a letter written at Madrid five years afterwards, when Prescott's work was published, with a prefatory acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Irving for surrendering the subject. "When I gave it up to him, I in a manner gave him up my bread, for I depended upon the profit of it to recruit my waning finances. I had no other subject at hand to supply its place. I was dismounted from my *cheval de bataille*, and have never been completely mounted since. Had I accomplished that work, my whole pecuniary situation would have been altered. . . . When I made the sacrifice, it was not with a view to compliments or thanks, but from a warm and sudden impulse. I am not sorry for having made it. Mr. Prescott has justified the opinion I expressed at the time, that he would treat the subject with more close and ample research than I should probably do, and would produce a work more thoroughly worthy of the theme."

The letter containing this confession derives an added interest from the fact that it contains also a

sketch of Irving's proposed treatment of the subject. As an indication of the author's methods in dealing with historical material, the letter is of the utmost significance for the understanding of the principles which guided him in his literary work, and must be quoted from at some length. "I should not have had any preliminary dissertation on the history, civilization, etc., of the nations, as I find such dissertations hurried over, if not skipped entirely, by a great class of readers, who are eager for narrative and action. I should have carried on the reader with the discoverers and conquerors, letting the newly explored countries break upon him as it did upon them; describing objects, places, customs, as they awakened curiosity and interest, and required to be explained for the conduct of the story. The reader should first have an idea of the superior civilization of the people from the great buildings and temples of stone and lime that brightened along the coast, and 'shone like silver.' He should have had vague accounts of Mexico from the people on the seaboard, from the messengers of Montezuma. . . . Every step, as he accompanied the conquerors on their march, would have been a step developing some striking fact, yet the distance would still have been full of magnificent mystery. He should next have seen Mexico from the mountains, far below him, shining with its vast edifices, its glassy lakes,

its far-stretching causeways, its sunny plain, surrounded by snow-topped volcanoes. Still it would have been vague in its magnificence. At length he should have marched in with the conquerors, full of curiosity and wonder, on every side beholding objects of novelty, indicating a mighty people, distinct in manners, arts, and civilization from all the races of the Old World. . . . My intention also was, to study the different characters of the *dramatis personæ*, so as to bring them out in strong relief, and to have kept them, as much as possible, in view throughout the work." This description makes us feel that there might have been room in our literature for Irving's "Conquest of Mexico" as well as Prescott's, and makes us almost regret that he did not pursue his original purpose and complete the work.

Feeling the need of remunerative work of some kind, Irving made an arrangement with the "Knickerbocker" magazine for a monthly article. The first of these articles appeared in March, 1839, and they were continued for two years. Most of them were collected, many years afterwards, into the volume called "Wolfert's Roost." In 1840, he published a letter in the "Knickerbocker" on the subject of international copyright, then before Congress, in which he took a strong stand for the principle of national honesty in dealing with the literary property

of foreigners. "I have seen," he said, "few arguments advanced against the proposed act, that ought to weigh with intelligent and high-minded men; while I have noticed some that have been urged, so sordid and selfish in their nature, and so narrow in the scope of their policy, as almost to be insulting to those to whom they are addressed." But his hope that the proposed measure would be carried by "an overwhelming if not unanimous vote" was, as we know, doomed to disappointment. He could hardly have anticipated that it would still be a full half-century before the growth of enlightenment would bring about the performance of that act of elementary justice.

The ensuing two years (1840–1841) were spent peacefully at Sunnyside, varied by occasional visits to New York and to the country-houses of his friends. The literary work done included the "Knickerbocker" articles, a sketch of the life of Goldsmith, and a sentimental biography of Margaret Davidson, a precocious child whose early death had greatly afflicted him. A letter from this period gives a pleasant picture of the life at Sunnyside. "Some of our neighbors are here only for the summer, having their winter establishments in town; others remain in the country all the year. We have frequent gatherings at each other's houses, without parade or expense, and I do not know when I have seen

more delightful little parties, or more elegant little groups of females. We have, occasionally, excellent music, for several of the neighborhood have been well taught, have good voices, and acquit themselves well both with harp and piano: and our parties always end with a dance. We have picnic parties also, sometimes in some inland valley or piece of wood, sometimes on the banks of the Hudson, where some repair by land, and others by water."

VIII

The tranquil existence thus described came to an end, for the time being, when Irving received, early in 1842, the wholly unexpected news of his nomination for the post of Minister to Spain. He had at last settled down to work upon the life of Washington, long contemplated and many times postponed. The appointment came from President Tyler, and was made at the solicitation of Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State. The thought of a new term of exile was very agitating to him, but his hesitation in accepting the post was overborne by the evident wishes of his friends, by the cordial public approval given to the appointment, and by the consideration that he could work upon the life of Washington almost as well in Madrid as at Sunnyside. He wrote to Webster accepting the position, invited three

young men to go with him as his diplomatic family, made a round of farewell visits in New York and Washington, placed his business affairs in the hands of his nephew Pierre, and sailed for Liverpool early in April. Just before he left he was called upon to preside at the Dickens dinner in New York. He could not get out of it, and his distress at the prospect was amusing. "I shall certainly break down," was his invariable remark whenever the subject was mentioned. He did break down, in a sense, for he discarded the manuscript speech he had prepared, and his few extempore remarks were interrupted by so much disconcerting applause, that he sat down after making one of the briefest post-prandial speeches on record.

The journey to Spain was made in leisurely fashion, and Irving did not reach Madrid until late in July. On his way, he attended a levee in London, and was presented to the young Queen and the Prince Consort. His old friends, among them Rogers and Moore, did much to make his stay in England pleasant. In Paris, he made the customary diplomatic calls, in company of the American minister, Lewis Cass, and was presented to the King at Neuilly. He had been too long a man of the world to be dazzled by the society which was opened to him by his diplomatic office, and his thoughts were ever turned homeward. "I am too old a

frequenter of the theatre of life to be much struck with novelty, pageant, or stage effect, and could willingly have remained in my little private *loge* at Sunnyside, and dozed out the rest of the performance." Reaching Madrid he took possession of the residence of his predecessor and was soon comfortably installed, together with the members of his suite.

The Spain to which he now returned after an absence of more than twelve years was in a condition of political turmoil. Since the date of his former sojourn, Ferdinand VII. had died, confirming the succession to his infant daughter Isabella, with her mother as guardian and regent. Immediately thereafter, the Carlist insurrection had broken out, plunging the country into civil war. In 1840, after seven years of struggle, the forces of Don Carlos had been defeated, the Queen regent Maria Christina had been forced to resign and had taken refuge in Paris to plot against the government, while Joaquin Baldomero Espartero, the leader of the constitutional party, had become regent in her stead. At the time of Irving's arrival, Espartero was at the head of the government, for the young Queen was still more than two years from her majority. This was a delicate situation for a diplomatist to deal with. Irving was accredited to the Queen, and he solved the problem by presenting his letters to Espartero to be transmitted by the latter to his sovereign.

An audience with the Queen followed, in the royal apartments which still showed marks of the violence done the year before, when a midnight attack had been made upon the palace, and an attempt, instigated by Maria Christina, to kidnap the royal children had been frustrated by the Queen's trusty halberdiers. By his recognition of Espartero as the actual head of the government, Irving broke a sort of diplomatic deadlock, and set a precedent which was followed by his diplomatic colleagues.

Finding his first quarters far too noisy, he moved, after a few weeks, into the principal apartment of a great house belonging to a bachelor nobleman. Here he had quiet, and spaciousness, and lovely views, and here he settled down definitely for the remainder of his stay. He expected to have little to do in an official way, and to find abundant leisure for work upon the biography of Washington. These expectations were not realized. He became too deeply interested in Spanish affairs, which seemed to "have an uncertainty hanging about them worthy of the fifth act of a melodrama," and his duties were found to be more exacting than he had supposed they would be. Only a few chapters of the biography were written during the entire four years of his residence in Madrid.

If his literary work suffered at this time, his correspondence made up for the loss in part. His

official despatches were so interesting that when they were received at the Department of State, Webster put aside all his other correspondence until he had read them. His private letters, also, became much longer than they had been before, and were filled with detailed descriptions of the brilliant and dramatic scenes with which he was associated. They contain many charming passages, of which the following, written to his sister, may be taken as an example. "I can imagine you smiling in the serene wisdom of your elbow chair, at the picture of a row of dignified diplomatic personages, some of them well stricken in years, and all of them sage representatives of governments, bowing with profound reverence, and conjuring up nothing to say to a couple of little girls. However, this is all the whipt syllabub of diplomacy. If I were to take you into one of our conferences with Cabinet Ministers, then you would know the solid wisdom required by our station; but this department of our official functions is a sealed book!" He was not always, however, as discreet as this would indicate, and one of these letters ends with the caution that its recipient "must not let it get to Mr. Webster's ears how communicative I am to her on these subjects; he may not be disposed to admit her into our secrets." And still another letter closes with the injunction to "keep it strictly among yourselves in the family."

Early in 1843, Irving suffered from a recurrence of the malady which had frequently disabled him in the past. It took the form of an inflammation of the skin, affecting the lower limbs, and made him almost a cripple. Under these circumstances, the long hours during which he was required to stand upon ceremonial occasions proved very irksome to him, and he sometimes had to excuse himself from attendance. He went to Paris in the fall, for medical treatment and change of scene, but returned with slight improvement. He continued to be tormented by this affliction for about two years, and his delight was boyish when he at last got the better of his malady. "One cannot help being puffed up a little on having the use of one's legs," was his playful comment on his recovery.

Espartero, who was called to Barcelona to suppress an insurrection in 1842, and again the following year, was nearing the end of his power; his enemies got the upper hand, and he was driven from office and into exile in the summer of 1843. Meanwhile, the insurgent forces gathered around the capital, which they soon occupied, forming a provisional government. This revolution resulted in reëstablishing the *moderados*, or aristocracy, in power, the recall of the Queen Mother, and the declaration by the Cortes of the Queen's majority at the age of thirteen, a year earlier then had been provided by

the will of the late King. The revolutionary weeks were a time of great excitement in Madrid, and Irving's correspondence gives a graphic account of the situation. His chief concern was for the safety of the young Queen, and when affairs seemed most critical, he took the lead in a diplomatic intervention for her protection. But the revolution turned out to be comparatively bloodless, and the new order of things was soon established.

The return of Maria Christina in the spring of 1844 was the occasion of a great demonstration at Aranjuez, whither the court went to meet her. Four years earlier, she had left with execrations ringing in her ears; she now came back to receive the plaudits of the whole kingdom. It was a great day. "In an open plain, a short distance from the road, was pitched the royal tent—very spacious, and decorated with fluttering flags and streamers. Three or four other tents were pitched in the vicinity, and there was an immense assemblage of carriages, with squadrons of cavalry, and crowds of people of all ranks, from the grandee to the beggar." In the evening there was a reception to the diplomatic corps. But the American Minister's ankles ached when he went to bed that night.

Even Irving's optimism was not proof against the disillusionments of the diplomatic life. Men in his position learn many secrets, and get close to the

actual motives which impel political action—motives very different from those which are thrown out as sops to the public. He writes: "I am wearied and at times heartsick of the wretched politics of this country, where there is so much intrigue, falsehood, profligacy, and crime, and so little of high honor and pure patriotism in political affairs. The last ten or twelve years of my life . . . has shown me so much of the dark side of human nature, that I begin to have painful doubts of my fellow-men, and look back with regret to the confiding period of my literary career, when, poor as a rat, but rich in dreams, I beheld the world through the medium of my imagination, and was apt to believe men as good as I wished them to be." He wrote this in one of his melancholy moods, when he was left alone by the departure of the last of the three young men who had come with him to Spain, and had served as *attachés* of the legation. There was now nothing left to console him in his home but the distant mountain prospects and the nightingales that sang in the garden.

He went to Barcelona in June, where the court was sojourning, to deliver letters from President Tyler to the Queen. The place delighted him, and the rich fertility of the country must have been a refreshing contrast to the arid environment of Madrid. Fifteen years earlier, he had passed a few days there, and his mind was filled with the thought of all that

had happened since. While at Barcelona, he received a despatch from Washington, granting him the leave of absence which he had asked for on account of his health. At the end of July, he set out for Paris, going by way of Marseilles, Avignon, the Rhone, and the Saône. He paid a pleasant visit to Louis Philippe, who gave him reminiscences of his backwoods days in America, and expressed a wish to visit the United States again. The journey was extended from Paris to London, and to Birmingham, where he remained for some weeks with his sister, Mrs. Van Wart. He returned to Madrid in November, to find Narvaez "quite the lord of the ascendant" and society at its gayest and most magnificent.

One incident of this journey is so charming as a revelation of the author's personality that it must be given as told in his correspondence. It was on the steamer from Barcelona to Marseilles, and he was writing a letter in the cabin, a beautiful young Spanish woman just opposite him at the table. He started to write a description of her, for which he had to make observations now and then, and this naturally attracted her attention. The rest of the story may be told in his own words.

"She had caught my eye occasionally, as it glanced from my letter toward her. 'Really, Señor,' said she, at length, with a smile, 'one would think you were a painter, taking my likeness.' I could not

resist the impulse. 'Indeed,' said I, 'I am taking it; I am writing to a friend the other side of the world, discussing things that are passing before me, and I could not help noting down one of the best specimens of the country that I had met with.' A little bantering took place between the young lady, her husband, and myself, which ended by my reading off, as well as I could into Spanish, the description I had just written down. It occasioned a world of merriment, and was taken in excellent part. The lady's cheek, for once, mantled with the rose. She laughed, shook her head, said I was a very fanciful portrait painter; and the husband declared that, if I would stop at St. Filian, all the ladies in the place would crowd to me to have their portraits taken—my pictures were so flattering. I have just parted with them. The steamship stopped in the open sea, just in front of the little bay of St. Filian; boats came off from shore for the party. I helped the beautiful original of the portrait into the boat, and promised her and her husband, if ever I should come to St. Filian, I would pay them a visit. The last I noticed of her, was a Spanish farewell wave of her beautiful white hand, and the gleam of her dazzling teeth as she smiled adieu. So there's a very tolerable touch of romance for a gentleman of my years."

The greater part of 1845 may be passed over briefly. It found Irving a participant in many

festivities, for he was again in excellent physical condition, and keenly alive to the interest of existence. His sixty-second birthday discovers him "in fine health, in the full enjoyment of all my faculties, with my sensibilities still fresh, and in such buxom activity that, on my return home yesterday from the Prado, I caught myself bounding up-stairs three steps at a time, to the astonishment of the porter, and checked myself recollecting that it was not the pace befitting a Minister and a man of my years." Irving's personal appearance in these later years is thus described by an unnamed correspondent of Charles Dudley Warner: "He had dark gray eyes; a handsome straight nose, which might perhaps be called large; a broad, high, full forehead, and a small mouth. I should call him of medium height, about five feet eight and a half to nine inches, and inclined to be a trifle stout. There was no peculiarity about his voice; but it was pleasant and had a good intonation. His smile was exceedingly genial, lighting up his whole face and rendering it very attractive; while, if he were about to say anything humorous, it would beam forth from his eyes even before the words were spoken. As a young man his face was exceedingly handsome, and his head was well covered with dark hair; but from my earliest recollection of him he wore neither whiskers nor moustache, but a dark brown wig, which, although

it made him look younger, concealed a beautifully shaped head."

Toward the close of 1845 he made up his mind to return to private life, and his resignation was sent to Washington in December. Some weeks before this he had started on a brief visit to Paris, by way of Bordeaux, Nantes, and the Loire to Orleans. The journey was unexpectedly lengthened, and extended to England, where the Oregon question was the subject of much stormy discussion. The author of "Astoria" knew something about this question, and he thought that his presence in England might be of service to his country at what seemed to be a critical juncture. He believed the American claim to the disputed territory to be a just one, and blamed the English government for its unwillingness to accept the generous compromise we had suggested. "By neglecting to close with our offer, and to negotiate upon the basis of the forty-ninth parallel, the British diplomatists have left the question at the mercy of after influences, through the malignancy of the British press and the blustering of our candidates for popularity, to get up prejudice and passion on both sides, and to make diplomatic negotiation almost hopeless." He returned to Madrid in March, 1846, to find the Narvaez government tottering to its fall. A month later, Narvaez had followed Espartero into exile.

When he returned to Madrid, Irving expected that

the acceptance of his resignation would be awaiting him, but it did not come for some weeks. Meanwhile, in anticipation of his departure, he had turned over his domestic establishment to Mr. Albuquerque, the Brazilian Minister, with whom he lived *en famille* during the remaining months of his stay. When the news came that his resignation had been acted upon and his successor named, it was accompanied by news of the outbreak of the Mexican War, which he regretted deeply, although his feeling about it, when once begun, was what his feeling had been in 1812, at the time of our ill-advised war with England. He expressed the hope that Taylor's early victories would be speedily followed up by a magnanimous adjustment of the dispute. Late in July, his successor appeared upon the scene and took over the legation, leaving Irving free to follow his own devices. After taking formal leave of the Queen, and informal leave of his friends, he reached London in August, and sailed for America in September. He landed in Boston on the eighteenth, and the next day found him with his relatives at Sunnyside.

IX

Irving's first concerns when he again found himself beneath his own roof-tree, were to build an addition to the cottage, and to work at the revision

of his books, with an eye to the publication of a uniform collective edition. For once, his speculative investments had proved successful, and he found money coming in to him from unexpected quarters and in unexpected amounts. The new plans for Sunnyside could safely be counted upon to absorb these receipts, but a recurrence of the old malady prevented him from going on very rapidly with the alterations. "It is some little annoyance to me," he writes, "that I cannot get about and find some means of spending that sum of money which you tell me Pierre has been making for me. I think he takes advantage of my crippled condition, which prevents my going on with my improvements; and I fear, if I do not get in a disbursing condition soon, he will get the weather gage of me, and make me rich in spite of myself." In spite, however, of this relative prosperity, he thought he might have to return to the practice of law, and went so far as to secure a desk in the office of John Treat Irving, his brother. The literary activities of 1847, aside from the work of revision already mentioned, took the shape of some dallying with manuscript material (unearthed from his trunks) concerned with the Moorish chronicles, and of much hard work upon the life of Washington, which at last showed signs of coming into being.

The early months of 1848 were spent in New

York, partly as the guest of John Jacob Astor. When Mr. Astor died in March of that year, it was found that Irving had been appointed one of the executors of the estate. The business of settlement, and the negotiations for the republication of his works, filled his time very completely for a while, although society and the opera were not lacking by way of diversion. The publishing arrangement, made with George P. Putnam, was liberal in its terms, and covered both the old books and whatever new ones the author might write. It was destined to prove highly advantageous to both parties, and brought to Irving eighty-eight thousand dollars during the remaining eleven years of his life.[1] At the time when it was made, curious to relate, the works of the most successful of American authors had been long out of print, and were by no means easy to obtain. The generation that had sprung up since the days of "Knickerbocker" and "The Sketch-Book" knew Irving as a name, but had only the most fragmentary acquaintance with his writings. The new edition, which it took the next two years to produce, remedied this defect, and made Irving one of the standard authors whose works every library must

[1] This is the amount stated by Charles Dudley Warner in his biography. But George Haven Putnam, writing in 1909 of Irving's business dealings with his publishers, says that the royalties secured during these eleven years amounted to between $200,000 and $250,000.

include as a matter of course. This publishing arrangement put an end to his plan of resorting to the law for a livelihood. Upon this subject, George Haven Putnam has the following anecdote:

"The son of John Treat Irving told me, as his father had told him, that Washington came into his brother's office actually dancing with glee. 'Brother John,' he said, 'here is a fool of a publisher willing to pay me a thousand dollars a year for doing nothing. I shall not bother myself further with the troubles of the law'; and (said John the second) 'my uncle in his satisfaction actually kicked over his desk.'"

Besides the books which have thus far been accounted for in this biography, as they were written from year to year, the new edition included the "Life of Goldsmith" and "Mahomet and His Successors." Twice before had Irving prepared a sketch of Goldsmith's life, and now, stimulated by the new material found in Forster's biography, he expanded his earlier work into the fascinating volume which has given delight to many thousands of readers. Of all the writers of the past, Goldsmith was the one with whom he felt the closest kinship, and he acknowledged the relationship by inserting Dante's apostrophe to his master Virgil into the preface.

"Tu se' lo mio maestro, e'l mio autore;
Tu se' solo colui da cui io tolsi
Lo bello stile che m' ha fatto onore."

But when he was charged with servile imitation of his master, he became indignant, and declared that he had never imitated anybody. The "Mahomet" was a by-product of his studies of the Moorish dominion in Spain, and, like the "Goldsmith," was an earlier sketch expanded into a work of considerable dimensions.

We thus see that the summer of 1850 found Irving's literary work completed, save for the "Life of Washington," the collection of reprinted articles called "Wolfert's Roost," and the posthumous volume of "Spanish Papers." It had, moreover, received its definitive revision, was before the public in uniform shape, and in the hands of a publisher who could be trusted to make the most of it in the interests of all the parties concerned. All that the author feared now was that he might not live to complete his *magnum opus*. "If I can only live to finish it, I would be willing to die the next moment," were his words. His relations with his publisher were the most pleasant possible. He wrote to Mr. Putnam in 1852, saying: "I never had dealings with any man, whether in the way of business or friendship, more perfectly free from any alloy. That those dealings have been profitable, is mainly owing to your own sagacity and enterprise. . . . You called [my books] again into active existence, and gave them a circulation that I believe has surprised even yourself. In

rejoicing at their success, my satisfaction is doubly enhanced by the idea that you share in the benefits derived from it."

The years now flowed serenely on, and the happy life at Sunnyside was now and then varied by a little journey—to Saratoga for the waters, to Washington for an examination of the archives, to Niagara Falls or the Shenandoah Valley for change of scene and the companionship of friends. There were annoyances now and then, the chief of them being the invasion of his river bank by the railway, with the "infernal alarum" of its steam whistles. There were the usual bores, who forced themselves upon him and who wrote him letters which he was too courteous not to answer, but which made him feel as if "entangled in a network of cobwebs." And there were also periods of illness, with their note of warning that a septuagenarian must not expect too much of life.

When the news of Louis Napoleon's infamous suppression of French liberty reached Irving he was not a little excited, although not moved to any marked expression of indignation. When he read of the Spanish marriage, he indulged in reminiscences. "Louis Napoleon and Eugénie Montijo, Emperor and Empress of France!—one of whom I have had a guest at my cottage on the Hudson; the other, whom, when a child, I have had on my knee at Granada!" It was

curious indeed. When these words were written, Irving had just returned from Washington, where he had spent several weeks early in 1853, and where he had witnessed a change of administration—"the two Presidents arm in arm, as if the sway of an immense empire was not passing from one to the other"—which must have stood in his mind in striking contrast with the recent change in the administration of the French government. Kossuth's visit to New York also interested him greatly. He conceived a deep admiration for the man, although he was unable to see in the Hungarian cause any reason for political interference on the part of our government. A note about another visitor startles us for a moment. "We had a visit from Mr. James, the novelist, and his family." It takes a little time to realize that Agamemnon had a predecessor of the same name.

On the third of April, 1853, Irving came "of full age." He was naturally affected by reaching his seventieth milestone, as may be seen in these quotations from his letters: "I could never have hoped, at such an advanced period of life, to be in such full health, such activity of mind and body, and such capacity for enjoyment as I find myself at present." "I can scarcely realize that I have indeed arrived at the allotted verge of existence, beyond which all is special grace and indulgence. . . . While I have still a little music in my soul to be called out by any

touch of sympathy, while I can enjoy the society of those dear to me, and contribute, as they tell me, to their enjoyment, I am content and happy to live on. But I have it ever present to my mind that the measure of my days is full and running over; and I feel ready at any moment to lay down this remnant of existence, with a thankful heart that my erratic and precarious career has been brought to so serene a close, among the scenes of my youth, and surrounded by those I love."

Early in 1855, the volume named "Wolfert's Roost" was published. It was made up mainly of the papers he had contributed in 1840–1841 to the "Knickerbocker Magazine," although there were besides a few unprinted sketches. Soon thereafter, the first volume of the "Life of Washington" made its appearance. The second volume followed late that year, while 1856, 1857, and 1859, were the respective dates of the remaining three. It cost a heroic struggle to complete the work, and at times it seemed doubtful if the vital spark could be kept alight long enough to permit the author to write "finis" after the fifth volume. But his dearest wish was realized, and the printed book was in his hands some months before his death.

The "Life of Washington" is the most extensive of Irving's works, and the one which cost him the greatest pains. It may almost be described as the

work of his whole life, to which he was dedicated from that day of childhood when Washington's hand rested upon his head. It lacked something of the freshness and brilliancy of his earlier writings, for it was the product of a jaded intellect, and its subject-matter was not altogether grateful. The battles bothered him not a little, for he had no special knowledge of strategy, and Washington's later administrative career seemed to him repellently arid, for he did not have the instinct of the political historian. But it was, on the whole, a solid performance, and accomplished its author's aim. That aim was expressed in his correspondence from time to time, and may be illustrated by these extracts from a letter to Tuckerman: "My great labor has been to arrange these facts in the most lucid order, and place them in the most favorable light, without exaggeration or embellishment, trusting to their own characteristic value for effect." "I have availed myself of the license of biography to step down occasionally from the elevated walk of history, and relate familiar things in a familiar way; seeking to show the prevalent passions, and feelings, and humors of the day, and even to depict the heroes of Seventy-six as they really were—men in cocked hats, regimental coats, and breeches; and not classic warriors, in shining armor and flowing mantles, with brows bound with laurel, and truncheons in their hands."

To supplement these statements of Irving's purpose, we may give a passage from Prescott's letter to the author, after reading four of the five volumes. "I have never before fully comprehended the character of Washington; nor did I know what capabilities it would afford to his biographer. Hitherto we have only seen him as a sort of marble Colossus, full of moral greatness, but without the touch of humanity that would give him interest. You have known how to give the marble flesh color, that brings it to the resemblance of life . . . Yet, I see, like your predecessors, you are not willing to mar the beautiful picture, by giving Washington the infirmity of temper which common report assigns to him." The closing sentence of this comment touches upon the chief weakness of the biography. It is a literary production, rather than a realistic one, and the artistic idealization of its subject is not altogether conformable to the facts.

The panic of 1857 affected Irving in the sense that it made business difficulties for his publisher, who had lost heavily upon some of his ventures. This brought about an accounting and a new agreement. During the nine years that the old agreement had lasted, no less than three hundred and fifty thousand volumes of his works had been sold, and Irving's receipts had far exceeded his most sanguine expectations. The sale had been a steadily in-

creasing one, and his royalties for the year 1857 alone had been approximately twenty-five thousand dollars. By the terms of the new agreement, he purchased the plates of all his books, and the publisher thereafter acted only as agent for their sale. This resulted in further substantial returns to the author during the rest of his life, and to his estate for many years afterwards, although the returns naturally fell off as the books lapsed from copyright, and became the prey of unscrupulous publishers.

The last two years of Irving's life present a melancholy picture of infirmity and suffering. Early in 1858 an obstinate catarrhal affection deadened his hearing, and made a serious draft upon his vitality. It developed into an untimely drowsiness, violent coughing at night, and an asthmatic condition which resulted in much distress, and at last ended his life. His faculties, however, remained almost unimpaired to the end, and even when most depressed, his talk preserved the old-time cheerfulness and charm. Says his biographer: "It was very remarkable, that at this very time, when filled with dread of the night, and anxious that all should sit up very late to shorten it as much as possible, he was never more delightful in conversation than during those long evenings. The excitement of his mind seemed to increase his powers, just as persons in a fever are often more brilliant than at any other

time. All the interesting scenes of his life seemed to pass before him—a thousand anecdotes of persons and things of which you had never heard, related in the most graphic manner, and filled, at times, with all his old fun and humor. Scenes and quotations from favorite authors were constantly presenting themselves, and were given with a depth of feeling that added wonderfully to their effect." He was surrounded, of course, by everything that could give comfort to a man in his condition, and watched over with loving tenderness by the members of his household. He had once described his home as "well stocked with womenkind, without whom an old bachelor is a forlorn, dreary animal," and in these last days he appreciated more fully than ever before what a comfort it was to live in "a house full of nieces" solicitous for his well-being.

He received an occasional visitor even in his last days, and the words of one of these, who was at Sunnyside only three weeks before the end, shall give us one last glimpse of Irving in the flesh. The visitor was Theodore Tilton, who was destined to survive him by nearly half a century. "Mr. Irving is not so old-looking as one would expect who knew his age. I fancied him as in the winter of life; I found him only in its Indian summer. He came down-stairs, and walked through the hall into the back parlor, with a firm and lively step that might

well have made one doubt whether he had truly attained his seventy-seventh year! He was suffering from asthma, and was muffled against the damp air with a Scotch shawl, wrapped like a great loose scarf around his neck; but as he took his seat in the old arm-chair, and, despite his hoarseness and troubled chest, began an unexpectedly vivacious conversation, he almost made me forget that I was the guest of an old man. . . . As I came away, the old gentleman bundled his shawl about him, and stood a few moments on the steps. A momentary burst of sunshine fell on him through the breaking clouds. In that full light he looked still less like an old man than in the dark parlor by the shaded window. . . . I wish always to remember him as I saw him at that last moment." It is a pleasant memory, and we will keep it for our own.

Irving died November 28, 1859, soon after retiring for the night. There had been a beautiful sunset that evening, which had left him entranced. It was the last sunset of his life, for he died, instantly and with no more than a passing pang, soon after his head had touched the pillow. The next morning, when his death became known, New York put on mourning, adjourned its public business, and hung its flags at half-mast. The funeral took place December 1. The services were performed according to the rites of the Episcopal church (of which he

had been a communicant since 1848) in Christ Church, Tarrytown. The burial was in the cemetery near by, on a hillside between the valley of Sleepy Hollow and the Hudson. Thither he had brought from New York, six years before, the remains of his family for reinterment in a spot of which they might never become dispossessed, and there he had marked out, by his mother's side, the space for his own resting-place.

Irving's place in literature is secure. It depends in part, no doubt, upon his pioneer position, upon the fact that he was the first of American authors to achieve wide-spread celebrity. But that fact alone would not account for his lasting fame. There were Americans before him who made a fair start toward literary distinction, and whose names are now only dusty memories. That Irving's name is much more than this must be chiefly accounted for by the fact that he was, absolutely considered, one of the best writers who in his time were using the English language for literary expression. His matter was almost wholly of the past, and of the imagined rather than the real past, while his manner was that of the classical writers of the eighteenth century. But it was a manner that clothed its matter with a diction of unfailing charm, and bestowed fresh interest upon the themes with which it was occupied. It touched nothing that it did not adorn, to use once more the

words applied by Dr. Johnson to Irving's exemplar. With so much to be said in his praise, there is little justification for the reproach that he had no message for the age, that his mind was untroubled by the ferment of contemporary thought, that his outlook was retrospective and not prescient. Prophecy was not his *métier*, and he was the last person in the world to don robes that he could not wear gracefully and with comfort.

In one respect, indeed, he exercised an active and wholesome influence upon the thought of his time. The half-century that followed our political separation from the mother-country was fast leading us toward a moral estrangement as well. There was much soreness of feeling on both sides, which politicians and journalists alike (after their kind) found it to their interest to aggravate rather than to allay. During this period of strained feeling, Irving's influence was a potent agency in the process of healing and reconciliation. Not consciously exerted toward this end—he was too thoroughly an artist for that—its ministry was made all the more effective by its indirection; by subtler methods than those of argument or homily his influence helped American readers to regain something of their lost sympathy for their parent stock, aroused in English readers a new respect for the people oversea who were, after all, their kinsmen. "The Sketch-Book" and "Brace-

bridge Hall" did not a little to substitute sympathy and mutual understanding for the old-time acrimonious hostility. The only attacks of any bitterness that were ever made upon Irving came from a few lewd fellows of the baser sort who found a personal grievance in his conciliatory attitude toward England and his willingness to forget the unpleasant past.

His writings everywhere give evidence of his literary conscience and artistic sincerity. If external evidence of these qualities were needed it might easily be adducd from the many passages in his correspondence which reveal the writer at work, and show with what painstaking effort his books were made. For one thing, he knew his limitations, and kept within them. He was urged to write a novel, but instinct warned him against such an attempt, and he expressed the belief that his short stories would be oftener re-read than any novel he could have written. This was probably true, for his short stories not only created that species of composition in American literature, but provided a standard of workmanship that has hardly been surpassed since. His own conception of the short story is worth quoting: "I consider a story merely as a frame on which to stretch my materials. It is the play of thought, and sentiment, and language; the weaving in of characters, lightly, yet expressively

delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life; and the half-concealed vein of humor that is often playing through the whole,—these are among what I aim at, and upon which I felicitate myself in proportion as I think I succeed." It is a good deal of a programme, but Irving carried it out successfully a number of times, and in at least two instances had the further triumph of doing what few story-writers have ever done, for "Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle" are stories that have attached themselves as veritable legends to the spots in which they are enacted, and have almost achieved the dignity of folk-lore.

Of Irving as a public character little need be added to what these pages have already said. He filled with dignity and discretion the offices which he accepted; he would doubtless have brought the same capabilities to those which he declined. Despite his many years abroad, he was always thoroughly American in spirit, although he did not find it necessary to emphasize his nationality by abusing Englishmen and other foreigners. This test of patriotism he was pitifully unable to meet. That he took a genuine and intelligent interest in the public affairs of his country goes without saying. We may find a sort of confession of political faith in a letter of 1838, which gives us the following passages: "As far as I know my own mind, I am thoroughly

a republican, and attached, from complete conviction, to the institutions of my country; but I am a republican without gall, and have no bitterness in my creed. I have no relish for puritans either in religion or politics, who are for pushing principles to an extreme, and for overturning everything that stands in the way of their own zealous career. . . . Ours is a government of compromise. We have several great and distinct interests bound up together, which, if not separately consulted and severally accommodated, may harass and impair each other." This is about as near as he ever comes to touching upon the great moral agitation which we now see to have been the most significant factor in American history during the last quarter-century of Irving's life. We may wish that he might have declared himself for the right in the sacred cause of human freedom, but we may not fairly censure him for his failure to sympathize with what must have seemed to him little more than an exhibition of blind fanaticism opposed to rancorous prejudice.

The character of Washington Irving the man, as distinguished from the author, should emerge as a fairly distinct picture from the preceding narrative of his career. He appears as one of the most lovable personalities in the history of our literature, or of any literature. He is endeared to us by the purity of his life, by the tenderness of his affection for family

and friends, by the sweetness of his disposition. He preferred to discover the virtues of his fellow-men rather than to expose their faults, and, although he indulged in satire at times, it was of the gentlest sort, free from sting, and without a touch of cynicism. Extremely sensitive himself, he could not bear to inflict pain upon others, and in this respect no one ever answered more fully to Newman's definition of a gentleman. Of malice and envy there were no traces in his composition; he rejoiced wholly in the good fortune of others, and sympathized with them sincerely in their reverses. His temperamental optimism made him a cheering presence wherever he went, and when he was laid to his final rest, those who had loved and now mourned him felt that their loss was in a measure softened by the memory that still remained to them as a lasting possession.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

I

THE injunction to "hitch your wagon to a star" is probably the most familiar of all the phrases of Emerson's mintage that have passed into general currency. The homely metaphor with its ideal application is typical of the man who stamped the counsel with his personality. A certain bust of Emerson is said to look like a Yankee when viewed from one angle, and like a Greek when viewed from another. "Plato come back to turn a Yankee phrase" is Mr. John Vance Cheney's way of expressing this duality, and Professor Woodberry expresses it by saying: "He is a shining figure as on some Mount of Transfiguration, and he was a parochial man." We are not yet so far removed from the time and the scene of his earthly sojourn that the memory of the man in his habit as he lived has become dimmed, and are yet far enough, from the vantage-point of another century, to be sure that he was one of the greatest of Americans, and that Matthew Arnold, when he called Emerson's writing "the most important work done in prose, in our

language, during the present century" stated the estimate that is likely to hold good.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of a family of eight children, all of whom he outlived, was born in Boston, May 25, 1803. In a brief biography like the present, little account can be taken of his ancestry, although the subject calls for closer consideration than usual. It has been said that a child's education should begin with his grandfather; in the case of Emerson it is evident that the education began many generations further back. Both directly and collaterally, his antecedents were clergymen, and the clerical stamp was impressed upon him at birth. His first American ancestor was Thomas Emerson, who came to New England in the great Puritan emigration, and settled in Ipswich about 1835. He pursued the useful calling of a baker, but his son Joseph became a minister, and from that son Ralph Waldo was descended, through Edward, Joseph, and two Williams, successively, all of them ministers but Edward. William Emerson the father of Ralph Waldo, after studying divinity at Harvard College, and preaching for several years in the town of Harvard, was in 1799 called to the First Church of Boston. The Unitarian ferment was already at work in the churches; the bonds of Puritan dogma were everywhere being strained, and when they were finally burst, the Puritan temper emerged from its bondage with no impairment of the

old seriousness, but with the gain of new qualities of sweetness and elasticity. William Emerson was suspected of latitudinarianism, and his preaching seems to have been infused with the liberal ideas that were then in the air, although he did not go so far as to break with the old associations. He died in 1811, leaving a widow, five boys from two to ten years of age, and a baby girl.

Emerson's mother, whose maiden name was Ruth Haskins, came of a good Boston family. She was described by Dr. Frothingham as a woman "of great patience and fortitude, of the serenest trust in God, of a discerning spirit, and a most courteous bearing, one who knew how to guide the affairs of her own house, as long as she was responsible for that, with the sweetest authority, and knew how to give the least trouble and the greatest happiness after that authority was resigned." The death of her husband left the family in straitened circumstances, although the church voted to pay a stipend to the widow for seven years, and for three years gave her the use of the parish house rent-free. She outlived her husband forty-two years, dying in 1853, at the age of eighty-four, in Ralph's house, where she had lived since his marriage. In her management of the family of children left on her hands at the death of William Emerson, she was greatly aided by her sister-in-law, Mary Moody Emerson, a woman of

strong character and remarkable intellectual attainments. The manuscript writings left by her exhibit passages that might be taken, both in manner and thought, for her famous nephew's, and Dr. Holmes goes so far as to aver that "far more of Mr. Emerson is to be found in this aunt of his than in any other of his relations in the ascending series."

Boarders were taken into the Emerson household to eke out the family expenses, and the children shared in the housework, did the chores, and drove the family cow to its daily pasture at a paddock just beyond the Common. But this did not mean that schooling was neglected. Education was taken seriously in those days, even for children, who were not coddled by kindergartens, but set to work upon the rudiments of solid knowledge as soon as they had learned to toddle. Ralph had been sent to school at two, and when less than three his father had expressed surprise that he could not yet read very well. He entered the Boston Latin School before he was ten, and it was during his first year there that he wrote to his Aunt Mary the following account of a typical day of his life. "Friday, 9th, I choose for the day of telling what I did. In the Morning I rose, as I commonly do, about five minutes before six. I then help Wm. in making the fire, after which I set the table for Prayers. I then call mamma about quarter after six. We spell as we did before you

went away. I confess I often feel an angry passion start in one corner of my heart when one of my Brothers gets above me, which I think sometimes they do by unfair means, after which we eat our breakfast; then I have from about quarter after seven till eight to play or read. I think I am rather inclined to the former. I then go to school, where I hope I can say I study more than I did a little while ago. I am in another book called Virgil, and our class are even with another which came to the Latin School one year before us. After attending this school, I go to Mr. Webb's private school, where I write and cipher. I go to this place at eleven and stay till one o'clock. After this, when I come home I eat my dinner, and at two o'clock I resume my studies at the Latin School, where I do the same except in studying grammar. After I come home I do mamma her little errands if she has any; then I bring in my wood to supply the breakfast room. I then have some time to play and eat my supper. After that we say our hymns or chapters, and then take our turns in reading Rollin, as we did before you went. We retire to bed at different times. I go at a little after eight, and retire to my private devotions, and then close my eyes in sleep, and there ends the toils of the day." It is a pleasant picture of a simple and well-ordered household, by no means without its lesson for the present time.

This direct transcript of the boy's life, sketched with *naïve* particularity, finds its complement in the essay on "Domestic Life," which shows us how these conditions appeared in the reflective consciousness of the man. "Who has not seen, and who can see unmoved, under a low roof, the eager, blushing boys discharging as they can their household chores, and hastening into the sitting-room to the study of to-morrow's merciless lesson, yet stealing time to read one chapter more of the novel hardly smuggled into the tolerance of father and mother—atoning for the same by some passages of Plutarch or Goldsmith; the warm sympathy with which they kindle each other in school-yard, or barn, or wood-shed, with scraps of poetry or song, with phrases of the last oration or mimicry of the orator; the youthful criticism, on Sunday, of the sermons; the school declamation, faithfully rehearsed at home, sometimes to the fatigue, sometimes to the admiration of sisters; the first solitary joys of literary vanity, when the translation or the theme has been completed, sitting alone near the top of the house; the cautious comparison of the attractive advertisement of the arrival of Macready, Booth, or Kemble, or of the discourse of a well-known speaker, with the expense of the entertainment; the affectionate delight with which they greet the return of each one after the early separations which school or business requires; the

foresight with which, during such absences, they hive the honey which opportunity offers, for the ears and imagination of the others; and the unrestrained glee with which they disburden themselves of their early mental treasures when the holidays bring them again together? What is the hoop that holds them stanch? It is the iron band of poverty, of necessity, of austerity, which, excluding them from the sensual enjoyments which make other boys too early old, has directed their activity into safe and right channels, and made them, despite themselves, reverers of the grand, the beautiful, and the good. Ah, short-sighted students of books, of nature, and of man! too happy could they know their advantages, they pine for freedom from that mild parental yoke; they sigh for fine clothes, for rides, for the theatre, and premature freedom and dissipation which others possess. Woe to them if their wishes were crowned! The angels that dwell with them, and are weaving laurels of life for their youthful brows, are Toil and Want and Truth and Mutual Faith." The ideal of wholesome youth which is set forth in this passage was realized in countless New England households of the last century; it is still realized in favored spots there and elsewhere, the extent to which the modern American family has forsaken it marks the depth of our descent to a lower plane.

This is not a plea for the advantage of poverty on

its own account. Extreme poverty is deadening rather than quickening in its effect, but frugality is another matter, and the pleasures that come with straitened means, that are achieved as the result of effort, are the only ones that bring with them their full value. Beyond certain narrow limits, deprivation becomes merely irksome, and the Emerson household doubtless found itself beyond those limits at times, as, for example, when one winter overcoat had to do for Ralph and his brother Edward. But there is no note of complaint in the echoes that come to us from that far-off boyhood; there is rather the note of brave determination to make the best of what life had to offer, and, as readers of Emerson well know, the memory of his youthful hardships left no residuum of bitterness in his consciousness.

It is not difficult to imagine this delicate youth fresh from the sweet home atmosphere, this "spiritual looking boy in blue nankeen," in his character as a schoolboy. Dr. Garnett puts it by saying that "he was not a schoolboy, but a boy at school." He did not play very much, he was not even the owner of a sled, and he had no part in the rough-and-tumble encounters held on the Common between his own schoolmates and the invading forces from Round Point. The most exciting incident of his schooldays came one day during the war with England, when it was rumored that a British fleet was on its way to

Boston harbor. Benjamin Apthorp Gould, father of the great astronomer, was then headmaster, and he took the boys with him to help in throwing up defenses on Noddle's Island. "The whole school went. I went, but I confess I cannot remember a stroke of work that I or my school-fellows accomplished." A more serious consequence of the war was the great increase in the cost of living in Boston. This sent the Emerson family to Concord for the last year of the struggle, where they found a home with the minister, Dr. Ezra Ripley, who was Ralph's grandfather-in-law, and whom he afterwards described as belonging to "the rear guard of the great camp and army of the Puritans, which, however, in its last days declining into formalism, in the heyday of its strength had planted and liberated America."

We get our first glimpse of Emerson as a clergyman when his baby sister died in 1814, and Ralph, aged eleven, conducted the family worship the next morning. Mr. Sanborn reports that Mrs. Ripley long afterwards told her admiration of "the grave and sweet composure with which he read the Scripture and prayed" upon that occasion. We may discern Emerson the future writer in various reports from his schoolday period. At eleven, he was translating passages from the "book called Virgil" into quite tolerable couplets, and at work upon "Fortus," an epic! He delivered "original poems" on exhibi-

tion days, and ornamented his letters with rhymes. Brother Edward, then at boarding-school, was the recipient of this paraphrase of a tragedy familiar to the nursery.

> "So erst two brethren climb'd the cloud capp'd hill,
> Ill-fated Jack and long-lamented Jill,
> Snatched from the crystal font its lucid store,
> And in full pails the precious treasure bore.
> But ah! by dull forgetfulness oppress'd
> (Forgive me, Edward) I've forgot the rest."

These lines are quoted, not because they have any intrinsic merit, but to provide a contrast for the picture of the boy conducting family prayers. A boy may be both good and precocious without being a prig, and Ralph was by no means lacking in the fun-loving instincts and the frank exuberance of normal boys everywhere.

II

Emerson entered Harvard College in 1817, and was graduated in regular course four years later. It was the tradition of his family that a college education must be had, no matter what the cost in economy and deprivation. His expenses were small, and they were largely met by his own exertions. He began as "President's freshman," which means that he was a sort of errand-boy to the president, and had his lodgings free. He was a waiter in the college

commons; he taught a country school in the winter holidays; he was a beneficiary of certain funds set apart for the needs of poor and deserving students. The Harvard of his time was hardly more than a boy's school, and looked after the welfare of its students with paternal solicitude. One of his letters mentions "a new law that no student shall go to the theatre, on penalty of ten dollars' fine at first offence, and other punishments afterwards." The president was Kirkland, and among the professors were Edward Everett, Edward Channing, and George Ticknor. Emerson's fellow-students included Josiah Quincy, C. W. Upham, George Ripley, W. H. Furness, and E. S. Gannett. Everett, who was professor of Greek, had long been one of the boy's idols, and was the most considerable influence in molding his thought during these college years. He wrote thus of him in after years: "Germany had created criticism in vain for us until 1820, when Edward Everett returned from his five years in Europe, and brought to Cambridge his rich results, which no one was so fitted by natural grace and the splendor of his rhetoric to introduce and recommend. . . . There was an influence on the young people from the genius of Everett which was almost comparable to that of Pericles in Athens. He had an inspiration which did not go beyond his head, but which made him the master of elegance."

Aside from this, and one or two other sources of special inspiration, Emerson did not find much to appeal to him in the routine of college life. He hated mathematics, and greatly preferred his own readings of Plato to the formal study of the eighteenth-century philosophy which was given him to chew upon. But his was "the instinct which leads the youth who has no faculty for mathematics, and weeps over the impossible Analytical Geometry, to console his defeats with Chaucer and Montaigne, with Plutarch and Plato at night." If he neglected his studies, he did enough of good desultory reading to make up for it. He read the authors above named, and the English dramatists, and Sterne, and Pascal, and a host of others. And he was busy with his note-books, and the writing of college exercises and poems. He took prizes for essays on "The Character of Socrates" and "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy," and another prize for declamation. He stood midway in rank among the class of fifty-nine with which he was graduated, and was assigned the class-day poem, although not until the honor had been declined by seven others.

A boy whom he tutored for a while said of him long afterwards that "he seemed to dwell apart, as if in a tower, from which he looked upon everything from a loophole of his own." He took long country walks, which helped to confirm him in his habit of

solitude. His Aunt Mary had spoken of "the wild and fruitless wish that you could be disunited from travelling with the souls of other men," and he went far toward its realization, even in these boyish days at college. A sensitive diffidence kept him apart from his fellows, and this condition was made more marked by his hesitancy of speech and his consciousness of the possession of tell-tale cheeks. He was, nevertheless, sought out more and more by his more studious associates, and became a leading spirit in the various literary societies. But conviviality was not one of his attributes, and when the wine went round he "grew grave with every glass" instead of becoming excited in proportion to his potations. All the time he felt keenly the semi-dependent position of his family, and was anxious for the time to come when he might do more for its support. "It appears to me the happiest earthly moment my most sanguine hopes can picture, if it should ever arrive, to have a home, comfortable and pleasant, to offer to mother; in some feeble degree to pay her for the cares and woes and inconveniences she has so often been subject to on our account alone." The modest ambition stated in this letter to his brother William was amply realized in after years, when for nearly a score of years the mother's home was with the son.

After his graduation, Emerson turned to teaching,

and spent three years at the task. His brother William had started a school for girls in Boston two years before, and Ralph now joined him in his work. For the first two years, he acted as assistant, and then, upon William's departure to Europe, where he was to study divinity at Göttingen, the younger brother was left in sole charge. He did not like the work. One reason was found in his shyness. "I was nineteen, had grown up without sisters, and in my solitary and secluded way of living, had no acquaintance with girls. I still recall my terrors at entering the school; my timidities in French, the infirmities of my cheek, and my occasional admiration of some of my pupils—*absit invidia verbo*—and the vexation of spirit when the will of the pupils was a little too strong for the will of the teacher." Thus he wrote long afterwards. At the time, he expressed himself with petulant vigor in a letter to a classmate. "To judge from my own happy feelings, I am fain to think that since commencement a hundred angry pens have been daily dashed into the sable flood to deplore and curse the destiny of those who teach. Poor, wretched, hungry, starving souls! How my heart bleeds for you! Better tug at the oar, dig the mine, or saw wood; better sow hemp or hang with it than sow the seeds of instruction." Yet a teacher he remained, in some sense, and under his own conditions, for the rest of his life, and as late as 1873 he

said that there never was a time when he would not have accepted a professorship at Harvard.

During these years of teaching, his thought frequently played truant, fixing itself upon what were to remain the chief subjects of its contemplation. "My teaching was partial and external. I was at the very time writing every night, in my chamber, my first thoughts on morals and the beautiful laws of compensation and of individual genius, which to observe and illustrate have given sweetness to many years of my life. I am afraid no hint of this ever came into the school, where we clung to the safe and cold details of languages, geography, arithmetic, and chemistry." The following comment upon the political situation dates from this teaching period, and shows that he regarded public affairs as a fit subject for the application of philosophical principles. "I find myself a little prone to croaking of late—partly because my books warn me of the instability of human greatness, and I hold that government never subsisted in such perfection as here. Except in the newspapers and the titles of office, no being could be more remote, no sound so strange. Indeed, the only time when government can be said to make itself seen and felt is at our festivals, when it bears the form of a kind of general committee for popular amusements. . . . Will it not be dreadful to discover that this experiment, made by America to ascertain if

men can govern themselves, does not succeed; that too much knowledge and too much liberty make them mad?" These words were written on the eve of Independence Day, 1822, when the halcyon political weather of the Era of Good Feeling was beginning to show portents of a coming change.

It was, perhaps, the dissatisfaction he felt with teaching, in addition to the touch of morbid sentiment frequently found in the youthful habit of too much introspection, that caused Emerson to fill his journal for 1822 with such despondent words as these: "In twelve days I shall be nineteen years old, which I count a miserable thing. Has any other educated person lived so many years and lost so many days? I do not say acquired so little, for by an ease of thought and certain looseness of mind I have perhaps been the subject of as many ideas as many of mine age. But mine approaching maturity is attended with a goading sense of emptiness and wasted capacity; with the conviction that vanity has been content to admire the little circle of natural accomplishments, and has travelled again and again the narrow round, instead of adding sedulously the gems of knowledge to their number. Too tired and too indolent to travel up the mountain path which leads to good learning, to wisdom and to fame, I must be satisfied with beholding with an envious eye the labourious journey and final success of my fellows,

remaining stationary myself, until my inferiors and juniors have reached and outgone me. . . . My infant imagination was idolatrous of glory, and thought itself no mean pretender to the honours of those who stood highest in the community, and dared even to contend for fame with those who are hallowed by time and the approbation of ages. It was a little merit to conceive such animating hopes, and afforded some poor prospect of the possibility of their fulfilment. This hope was fed and fanned by the occasional lofty communications which were vouchsafed me with the Muses' Heaven, and which have at intervals made me the organ of remarkable sentiments and feelings which were far above my ordinary train. And with this lingering earnest of bitter hope (I refer to the fine exhilaration which now and then quickens my day) shall I resign every aspiration to belong to that family of giant minds which live on earth many ages and rule the world when their bones are slumbering, no matter whether under a pyramid or a primrose? No, I will yet a little while entertain the angel."

He is quite as hard upon his emotional as upon his intellectual life, for the self-examination goes on to the following effect: "Look next from the history of my intellect to the history of my heart. A blank, my lord. I have not the kind affections of a pigeon. Ungenerous and selfish, cautious and cold, I yet wish

to be romantic; have not sufficient feeling to speak a natural, hearty welcome to a friend or stranger, and yet send abroad wishes and fancies of a friendship with a man I never knew. There is not in the whole wide Universe of God (my relation to Himself I do not understand) one being to whom I am attached with warm and entire devotion,—not a being to whom I have joined fate for weal or woe, not one whose interests I have nearly and dearly at heart; —and this I say at the most susceptible age of man. Perhaps at the distance of a score of years, if I then inhabit this world, or still more, if I do not, these will appear frightful confessions; they may or may not, —it is a true picture of a barren and desolate soul." These vaporings need not be taken very seriously; it required much less than the indicated score of years to make the mood which they depict a very old, unhappy, far-off thing in the serene later life of the man whose youth had given them vent.

In 1823, the Emerson family removed to what was then the suburban town of Roxbury, where Ralph sought to put himself "on a footing of old acquaintance with Nature, as a poet should," and where moonlight wanderings supplied his brain with "several bright fragments of thought." The success of the school had improved the family circumstances and now William was departing for Germany to study divinity at Göttingen, Edward was about to be

graduated from Harvard, and Charles was just getting ready to enter. The scholarly instincts of Ralph —who preferred to be called Waldo from this time on—were again stimulated, and he began to plan for his own divinity studies. "The sight of broad vellum-bound quartos, the very mention of Greek and German names, the glimpse of a dusty, tugging scholar, will wake you up to emulation for a month" —this is a note from the year in question. He was going in for divinity because it was the family tradition. He had misgivings about the profession, but was determined to give it a chance. "When I have been at Cambridge and studied divinity," he wrote at the beginning of 1823, "I will tell you whether I can make out for myself any better system than Luther or Calvin, or the liberal besoms of modern days." A year later he writes in his journal as follows: "I am beginning my professional studies. In a month I shall be legally a man. And I deliberately dedicate my time, my talents, and my hopes to the Church. Man is an animal that looks before and after; and I should be loth to reflect at a remote period that I took so solemn a step in my existence without some careful examination of my past and present life."

The introspective habit still rules him strongly, for we find him going on to indulge in a severe searching of his conscience. "I cannot dissemble

that my abilities are below my ambition. And I find that I judged by a false criterion when I measured my powers by my ability to understand and to criticize the intellectual character of another. For men graduate their respect, not by the secret wealth, but by the outward use; not by the power to understand, but by the power to act. I have, or had, a strong imagination, and consequently a keen relish for the beauties of poetry. . . . My reasoning faculty is proportionably weak, nor can I ever hope to write a Butler's Analogy or an Essay of Hume. Nor is it strange that with this confession I should choose theology, which is from everlasting to everlasting 'debateable ground.' For, the highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects is rather the fruit of a sort of moral imagination, than of the 'Reasoning Machines,' such as Locke and Clarke and David Hume. . . . In Divinity I hope to thrive. I inherit from my sire a formality of manner and speech, but I derive from him, or his patriotic parent, a passionate love for the strains of eloquence. I burn after the *aliquid immensum infinitumque* which Cicero desired. What we ardently love we learn to imitate. My understanding venerates and my heart loves that cause which is dear to God and man—the laws of morals, the Revelations which sanction, and the blood of martyrs and triumphant suffering of the saints which seal them. . . . I cannot accurately estimate my

chances of success, in my profession, and in life. Were it just to judge the future from the past, they would be very low. In my case, I think it is not. I have never expected success in my present employment. My scholars are carefully instructed, my money is faithfully earned, but the instructor is little wiser, and the duties were never congenial with my disposition. Thus far the dupe of Hope, I have trudged on with my bundle at my back, and my eye fixed on the distant hill where my burden would fall."

Emerson had begun his theological studies in an informal way some time before he gave up teaching. In January, 1825, he closed the school, thus separating himself (although not quite for good) from what he called the class of "day-laborers and outcasts of every description, including school-masters." His attitude toward the family profession at the time when he was preparing to take it up in earnest may be still further illustrated by the following passage: "I am blind, I fear, to the truth of a theology which I can't but respect for the eloquence it begets, and for the heroic life of its modern, and the heroic death of its ancient, defenders. I acknowledge it tempts the imagination with a high epic (and better than epic) magnificence, but it sounds like nonsense in the ear of understanding." Just before going back to the college quarters he had left in 1821, he struck this

balance of the accounts of the four intervening years. "I have learned a few more names and dates; additional facility of expression; the gauge of my own ignorance, the sounding-places and bottomless depths. I have inverted my inquiries two or three times upon myself and have learned what a sinner and what a saint I am. My cardinal vice of intellectual dissipation—sinful strolling from book to book, from care to idleness—is my cardinal vice still; is a malady that belongs to the chapter of incurables. I have written two or three hundred pages that will be of use to me. I have earned two or three thousand dollars, which have paid my debts and obligated my neighbors; so that I thank Heaven I can say, none of my house is the worse for me."

III

After a month as a student in Divinity Hall, his eyes gave out, and his general health was so unsatisfactory that he resorted to the heroic remedy of hard work on a farm. The summer brought a marked improvement in his condition, and the following year found him alternating between school-teaching and the pursuit of his theological studies. In October, 1826, he was "approbated" to preach by the Middlesex Association of Ministers. On account of his poor eyesight, he was excused from

the customary examinations. "If they had examined me strictly," he said long afterwards to Mr. Sanborn, "perhaps they would not have let me preach at all." His determination to adhere to the clerical profession was strengthened by the defection of his brother William, who had gone to Germany to continue his studies, had discovered that his beliefs were dissolving, had even sought Goethe's advice at Weimar, and was at last preparing to forsake theology and turn to the law. Waldo knew that this change of calling would grieve his mother, and he would not add to her grief by abandoning the ministry himself. At this time, the family was again living in Cambridge, where Charles was winning distinction as a student. Edward, who after his graduation had opened a school in Roxbury, had also failed in health, and was seeking to recover it in the Mediterranean. Robert, between Charles and Edward in age, was mentally defective and had been placed under careful guardianship away from home.

Five days after his "approbation," Emerson preached his first sermon at Waltham, Massachusetts. A month later, his health had become so precarious that he was advised to spend the winter in a warmer climate. His eyes still troubled him, he was afflicted with rheumatism, and his lungs showed symptoms of disease. November 25, 1826,

he sailed for Charleston, South Carolina. Six months were spent in the South, mainly in Charleston and St. Augustine. He preached occasionally during his absence from home, but lived idly for the most part, and felt both bored and discouraged. The life of St. Augustine was not exactly stimulating to work of any kind. "What is doing here? Nothing. It was reported in the morning that a man was at work in the public square, and all our family turned out to see him. . . . The Americans live on their offices; the Spaniards keep billiard tables, or, if not, they send their negroes to the mud to bring oysters, or to the shore to bring fish, and the rest of the time fiddle, mask, and dance. . . . I stroll on the sea-beach, and drive a green orange over the sand with a stick. Sometimes I sail in a boat, sometimes I sit in a chair." His first impressions of the "peculiar institution" date from this sojourn. "A fortnight since I attended a meeting of the Bible Society. The treasurer of this institution is marshal of the district, and by a somewhat unfortunate arrangement, had appointed a special meeting of the society and a slave-auction at the same time and place, one being in the Government House, and the other in the adjoining yard. One ear, therefore, heard the glad tidings of great joy, while the other was regaled with, 'Going, gentlemen, going!' and almost without changing our position we might aid in send-

ing the Scriptures into Africa, or bidding on 'four children without the mother,' who had been kidnapped therefrom. There is something wonderfully piquant in the manners of the place, theological or civil."

On his way from St. Augustine back to Charleston, he had for a fellow passenger Achille Murat, Napoleon's nephew, who had a plantation at Tallahassee, and who impressed him as "a type of heroic manners and sweet-tempered ability." Leaving his new friend at Charleston, Emerson made his way slowly northward, and returned home by way of Washington, Philadelphia, and New York. He was ten pounds to the good, and his health was much improved. He reached home in June, found that his mother had removed to Concord, but thought it best to establish himself in his old Divinity Hall quarters at Cambridge.

This remained his home for over a year, although he was away from it much of the time, filling various engagements as a substitute, among others at the First Church of Boston, at Northampton, New Bedford, Lexington, and Concord, New Hampshire. It was at the place last-named that he met Ellen Louisa Tucker, who was afterwards to become his first wife. He had several offers looking toward a permanent settlement in a pastorate, but still felt so uncertain about his health that he declined them.

In the summer of 1828, he had a great shock when his brother Edward, whose brilliant versatility had been the pride of the whole family, became violently insane. This was the end of an exceptionally promising career, for, although he recovered his faculties after a few months, and was discharged from the asylum as cured, he was never again his old self. Renouncing his legal career, he went to Porto Rico, where he obtained a minor commercial appointment, and died in 1834.

During the year which ended thus tragically, Emerson had been leading, subject to occasional interruptions, a vegetative existence. His journal gives us the following record: "I deliberately shut up my books in a cloudy July noon, put on my old clothes and old hat, and slink away to the whortleberry bushes, and slip with the greatest satisfaction into a little cow-path where I am sure I can defy observation. This point gained, I solace myself for hours with picking blueberries and other trash of the woods, far from fame behind the birch-trees. I seldom enjoy hours as I do these. I remember them in winter; I expect them in spring. I do not know a creature that I think has the same humor, or would think it respectable." When these words were written, there was a boy of eleven named Henry David Thoreau, growing up in Concord, who was probably then not old enough to share this "humor"

of the solitary, but who in later years was to become one of Emerson's spiritual intimates.

This year of semi-relaxation was a salutary period for the young philosopher, who began to "look less like a monument and more like a man"; and who by preference sought the society of merry persons of "soap-bubble" conversation. In such company he forgot about the mouse in his chest, and could turn from it in the best of spirits to take up book or pen. His Aunt Mary was still his chief confidant, and his letters to her afford the clearest revelations of his state of mind. "If men would avoid that general language and general manner in which they strive to hide all that is peculiar, and would say only what was uppermost in their own minds, after their own individual manner, every man would be interesting. Every man is a new creation, can do something best, has some intellectual modes and forms, or a character the general result of all, such as no other agent in the universe has; if he would exhibit that, it must needs be engaging, must be a curious study to every inquisitive mind. . . . A portion of truth, bright and sublime, lives in every moment to every man. It is enough for safety, though not for education." Thus early do we find his philosophy of extreme individualism shaping itself in the mold. Dr. Hedge reports him as saying at this time: "Owe no conformity to custom against your private judgment.

Have no regard to the influence of your example, but act always from the simplest motive."

Emerson's engagement to Miss Tucker was made in 1828, a week before Christmas. He had met her just a year earlier, but had seen her very little during the interval. Writing to his brother William to announce the engagement, he said: "I thought I had got over my blushes and my wishes when now I determined to go into that dangerous neighborhood on Edward's account. But the presumptuous man was overthrown by the eyes and the ear, and surrendered at discretion. He is now as happy as it is safe in life to be. She is seventeen years old, and very beautiful, by universal consent." When he ingenuously told of his engagement to the guests at the Concord boarding-house where he was stopping, it occasioned so much interest that the company at once proceeded to celebrate the occasion by singing the hymn:

> "Blest are the sons of peace,
> Whose hearts and hopes are one,
> Whose kind designs to serve and please
> Through all their actions run."

The bearings of this selection, in Captain Cuttle's immortal words, "lays in the application on it." The couple were married in September, 1829, and set up their home in Boston, where Emerson had already assumed the duties of his first (and last) pastorate.

It was on the 11th of the March preceding that he had been ordained as the colleague of the Rev. Mr. Ware at the Second Church, successor to the Old North Church of the Mathers, now dedicated to a liberal theology that must have made Increase, and Cotton, and Samuel, turn in their graves. A few weeks afterward, Mr. Ware resigned his incumbency, and Emerson was left in sole charge. His mother and his brother Charles joined the couple in their Boston home, and all seemed well. But the child-wife already bore the seeds of mortal disease, and died in February, 1831, after less than a year and a half of wedded life. He had tried to save her by taking her south to escape the terror of a New England spring the year before, and was planning to repeat the journey the next year, when the end came and left him desolate. His journal from this time onward gives many evidences of his deep bereavement, and it was his habit, until his departure for Europe, to make almost daily morning visits to her grave.

The two sermons which Emerson delivered on the first Sunday after his ordination were devoted to an exposition of his conception of the function of preaching. "It is much addicted to a few words; it holds on to phrases when the lapse of time has changed their meaning. Men imagine that the end and use of preaching is to expound a text, and forget that Christianity is an infinite and universal law. . . .

If any one hereafter should object to the want of sanctity of my style and the want of solemnity in my illustrations, I shall remind him that the language and the images of Scripture derive all their dignity from their association with divine truth, and that our Lord condescended to explain himself by allusions to every homely fact, and, if he addressed himself to the men of this age, would appeal to those arts and objects by which we are surrounded; to the printing-press and the loom, to the phenomena of steam and of gas, to free institutions and a petulant and vain nation." The sermons preached by Emerson during the three years of his pastorate, to the number of one hundred and seventy-one, remain in manuscript, only two having been printed. His biographer says that they are chiefly characterized by the "absence of rhetoric," although a few years earlier rhetoric had seemed to the writer an indispensable adjunct of effective discourse. There is much contemporary testimony to the effect that the sermons were simple, unconventional, and untheological, but full of an appealing charm which was heightened by the spiritual personality of the speaker. There were, of course, discordant voices in this chorus of appreciation, and one lady is on record as saying: "Waldo Emerson came last Sunday, and preached a sermon, with his chin in the air, in scorn of the whole human race."

A minister has other things to do besides preaching, and Emerson was not altogether successful in doing them. He says of himself that he did not excel in "domiciliaries," and there is a story that a Revolutionary veteran, who, in his dying hour, had summoned the minister for the customary consolations, was so dissatisfied with the performance that he rose from his bed, saying: "Young man, if you don't know your business, you had better go home." He was not good at funerals, and even the sexton was disappointed at his conduct of the ceremonies. On the other hand, he acquired many interests outside of his church. He was a member of the Boston School Board and chaplain of the State Senate. He made anti-slavery speakers welcome in his pulpit, and took an active part in philanthropical work. It was in connection with one of these interests, Father Taylor's Seaman's Mission, that M. D. Conway tells a well-known story. Some of Taylor's Methodist associates objected to his intercourse with a man who, being a Unitarian, was sure to go to "the place which a divine of Charles the Second's day said it was not good manners to mention in church." Taylor's reply was to the effect that if Emerson went there, he would change the climate, and emigration would set that way.

Emerson was duly ordained to be a minister, but he was foreordained to be a seeker after truth, pre-

pared to follow her whithersoever she might lead. It might have been predicted by any close observer that he would not long remain in formal communion with any church, even with a church so little orthodox as that of the Unitarian Congregationalists of New England. As a matter of fact, he occupied his pulpit at the Second Church for a little over three years, and then, after some searchings of conscience, but with no sensational display and with no bitterness of feeling on either side, he separated himself from the clerical profession. This step was the outcome of a process of almost insensible growth similar to that which, at a much later date, led Leslie Stephen to separate himself from the Church of England. He might have said in Stephen's very words, "I did not feel that the solid ground was giving way beneath my feet, but rather that I was being relieved of a cumbrous burden. I was not discovering that my creed was false, but that I had never really believed it." His progress toward religious emancipation may be easily traced during the decade preceding his abandonment of the pulpit. In his twentieth year he wrote: "An exemplary Christian of to-day, and even a minister, is content to be just such a man as was a good Roman in the days of Cicero, or of the imperial Antonines. Contentment with the moderate standard of pagan virtue implies that there was no very urgent necessity

r Heaven's last revelation; for the laws of morality ere written distinctly enough before, and philoso- ıy had pretty lively dreams of the immortality of e soul." A few years later, he wrote: "I am curi- ıs to know what the Scriptures do in very deed say ɔout that exalted person who died on Calvary, but do think it, at this distance of time and in the con- sion of language, to be a work of weighing of ırases and hunting in dictionaries." When, in 832, he had come to the point of writing that "the est part of the man, I sometimes think, revolts ost against his being a minister," and "I have metimes thought that in order to be a good minister was necessary to leave the ministry. The pro- ssion is antiquated," it was clear that some sort a crisis was at hand.

The special reason for his resignation was found the difficulty of satisfying his conscience respect- g the rite of the Lord's Supper. One of his two inted sermons is that which he preached Septem- r 9, 1832, upon this subject. He had previously esented this difficulty to the church, and various nsultations had been held with a view to bridging over in some way. It was proposed as a *modus vendi* that he should continue to perform the rite, ıtting upon it his own construction, and making l the mental reservations he chose to, while the ngregation should remain free to construe it in

the time-honored sense. But any such compromise was distasteful to Emerson, and he was confronted with the alternatives of placing himself in an insincere position and of resigning outright. That his decision was bound to be for the latter goes without saying, but it was not impulsively made, and he went up to the White Mountains for a while to think it over by himself. Shortly after his return from this season of self-communion, he preached the sermon above mentioned, explaining the reasons why he thought the observance of the rite inexpedient. "The use of the elements, however suitable to the people and the modes of thought in the East, where it originated, is foreign and unsuited to affect us. The day of formal religion is past, and we are to seek our well-being in the formation of the soul. To commemorate by a form a religious teacher whose life was a protest against form was "to make vain the gift of God," was "to turn back the hand on the dial." Bringing his argument to a close, he said: "I have no hostility to this institution; I am only stating my want of sympathy with it. Neither should I have obtruded this opinion upon other people, had I not been called by my office to administer it. That is the end of my opposition, that I am not interested in it. I am content that it stand to the end of the world if it please men and please Heaven, and I shall rejoice in all the good it pro-

uces." Having spoken these simple words, he nnounced his resignation, which was subsequently ccepted, with great reluctance, and with a provi- ion which continued the pastor's salary for a time. Of course, this step exposed Emerson to some sharp riticism, and it was suggested in some quarters hat he must be insane. There will always be some eople to think it insane for any man, for a mere natter of principle, to choose uncertainty and pov- rty in place of a comfortable income and an assured ocial position. How Emerson still felt toward the hurch he had left may be seen in the hymn begin- ing,

"We love the venerable house
Our fathers built to God,"

hich he wrote the year afterwards for the ordina- on of his successor.

IV

The double strain of the loss of his wife and the everance of his church relations affected Emerson's ealth rather seriously, and he determined to seek change of scene. His brother Edward, who had ome home for a short visit in the summer of 1832, as again in Porto Rico, and, as the event proved, Valdo had seen him for the last time. He at first ought of going to the West Indies to spend the inter with Edward, but, as he wrote to William in

New York, "in a few hours the dream changed into a purpureal vision of Naples and Italy." The household was consequently broken up, Charles remaining in Boston, and the mother going to live with a relative in Newton. Waldo wrote a letter of farewell to his former congregation, thanking them for "a thousand acts of kindness," and declining to accept any further continuance of the salary they had voted him. On Christmas, 1832, he sailed from Boston on a small trading brig, bound for the Mediterranean, and landed at Malta early in February, after a voyage of about six weeks, and a diet consisting mainly of pork and beans.

His stay in Europe lasted seven months. From Malta he went to Sicily, making the usual round; thence his itinerary took him through Italy, by way of Naples, Rome, Florence, Venice, and Milan, then across the Simplon to Geneva, and to Paris near the end of June. The remaining summer weeks were spent in England and Scotland. It cannot be said that Emerson was an appreciative tourist. The saying that they change their skies but not their souls who cross the seas was peculiarly exemplified in his case, which shows us that a man may live too wholly in his own web of abstractions. He found Italy "the same world of cakes and ale;" he saw only the "same faces under new caps and jackets." "I am not very sure that I grow much

wiser or any better for my travels. We put very different matters into the scales, but the balance never varies much. An hour in Boston and an hour in Naples have about equal value to the same person." "My own study is the best place for me, and there was always more fine society in my own little town than I could command." But he admits that "though travelling is a poor profession, bad food, it may be good medicine." These quotations impress upon us the parochial aspect of his nature. There have not been many men of parts who could see Venice for the first time, and find nothing more to say of it than this: "It is a great oddity, a city for beavers, but to my thoughts a most disagreeable residence. You feel always in prison and solitary. It is as if you were always at sea. I soon had enough of it."

What he wanted was intercourse with men and not with monuments. "I would give all Rome for one man such as were fit to walk here, and could feel and impart the sentiment of the place." But men were removed from him, on the Continent, by the barriers of speech, for Emerson had small acquaintance with the tongues, and the Bostonian French which he had taught to the young women in his brother's school was found to be curiously useless for communication with the foreigner. In Florence, however, he found Horatio Greenough, the

American sculptor, who obtained for him an introduction to Landor. He visited the old Roman in his Fiesolan villa, and talked art, literature, and politics, with him. His report of Landor's opinions, as published afterwards in "English Traits," was not altogether agreeable to the subject, who claimed that he had been misreported. One unfortunate remark, "he pestered me with Southey," was found particularly offensive by Southey's warm-hearted friend, and long afterwards impelled Mr. Swinburne, as Landor's most zealous champion, to characterize Emerson in terms so abusive that Mr. Swinburne's warmest admirers find it difficult to condone them.

The Italian churches did, indeed, arouse him to something like warmth of expression. He spoke with admiration of St. Peter's, and of the Florentine Duomo, "set down like an archangel's tent in the midst of the city." He asked, "Have the men of America never entered these European churches, that they build such mean edifices at home?" which seems a singular query for one whose puritanism was bred in the bone. He tried to imagine a form of service to accord with such surroundings. It should not be the colorless Protestant service, nor should it, like the Catholic, "show a priest trotting hither and thither, and bowing now on this side and now on that." But it should be a service in "good and manly taste," and one in which all should wor-

hip. One source of the strength of the Catholic hurch he clearly recognized and frankly appreci-ted. "How beautiful to have the church always pen, so that every tired wayfaring man may come and be soothed by all that art can suggest of a etter world, when he is weary with this!"

Emerson's month in Paris left him "not well leased." It was "a loud modern New York of a lace" without "the air of antiquity and history." e attended lectures at the Sorbonne, saw Mlle. Mars in a new play by Delavigne, and dined with eneral Lafayette. Leaving Paris, he landed in ondon on a Sunday in July, found lodgings, and ent straightway to service at St. Paul's. "Poor hurch" is his only comment upon this experience. e called on Coleridge at Highgate, who treated m to a monologue upon "the folly and ignorance Unitarianism," and recited his latest poem as s visitor rose to go. He also called upon John tuart Mill, who gave him a card to Carlyle. To eet Carlyle had long been Emerson's chief desire, though in 1833 Carlyle was nothing more than an nonymous essayist who was just then publishing queer farrago of humorous philosophy, called Sartor Resartus," in "Fraser's Magazine." But merson had discovered his "Germanic new-light riter" in the reviews before leaving home, although was not until he was in Rome that he knew what

name to attach to the personality who had so impressed him as a kindred spirit. Even in Edinburgh he had some difficulty in getting track of Carlyle and discovering his country retreat. At last, one day late in August, he drove out to Craigenputtock, and there took place what Dr. Garnett calls the most memorable meeting on a Scotch moor since Macbeth encountered the witches. The interest was mutual. Emerson wrote in his journal next day: "A white day in my years. I found the youth I sought in Scotland,—and good and wise and pleasant he seems to me, and his wife a most accomplished agreeable woman. Truth and grace and faith dwell with them and beautify them. I never saw more amiableness than is in his countenance." Carlyle's record of the meeting is that his visitor was "one of the most lovable creatures in himself we had ever looked on." The visit was for a day only, but it began a friendship that lasted as long as the two men lived. There never was a more striking illustration of the mutual attraction of diverse natures. The two men were as far apart as the poles in many of their views. As Mr. Cabot says: "Had they been required respectively to define by a single trait the farthest reach of folly in a theory of conduct, Carlyle would have selected the notion that mankind need only to be set free and led to think and act for themselves, and Emerson the

doctrine that they need only to be well governed." But the sympathy of these men for each other rested upon a deeper than the intellectual basis, and each of them respected to the full the earnestness and sincerity of the other.

A couple of days later, Emerson called upon Wordsworth at Rydal Mount. They talked of America, which the poet feared was in a sad case, of Carlyle, whom he thought "sometimes insane," and of Wordsworth's own work, which he illustrated by standing apart, and declaiming with great animation his three latest sonnets. A few days after this experience, Emerson was in Liverpool, ready to set sail for home. He recorded in his journal the impressions made by his seven months' stay in Europe taken as a whole. "I thank the great God who has led me through this European scene—this last schoolroom in which He has pleased to instruct me—in safety and pleasure, and has now brought me to the shore, and to the ship that steers westward. He has shown me the men I wished to see, Landor, Coleridge, Carlyle, Wordsworth; He has thereby comforted and confirmed me in my convictions. Many things I owe to the sight of these men. I shall judge more justly, less timidly, of wise men forevermore. To be sure, not one of these is a mind of the very first class; but what the intercourse with each of them suggests is true of intercourse with better men,

—that they never fill the ear, fill the mind, no, it is an idealized portrait which always we draw of them. Upon an intelligent man, wholly a stranger to their names, they would make in conversation no deep impression,—none of a world-filling fame. They would be remembered as sensible, well-read, earnest men; not more. Especially are they all deficient—all these four, in different degrees, but all deficient—in insight into religious truth. They have no idea of that species of moral truth which I call the first philosophy. The comfort of meeting men of genius such as these is that they talk sincerely. They feel themselves to be so rich that they are above the meanness of pretension to knowledge which they have not, and they frankly tell you what puzzles them."

V

Emerson sailed from England September 4, 1833, and arrived in New York after a five weeks' passage. He at once joined his mother at Newton. He was now thirty years old, unknown to any but local fame, and the world was before him to conquer. Although he had definitely given up the ministry in the formal sense, he was still willing to preach whenever he was wanted; and continued to accept pulpit invitations for the next fifteen years. To preach under these conditions meant simply to

deliver an ethical discourse in a church, accepting no responsibility for the observances that went with the sermon, or for the doctrines professed by the congregation. For several years after his return, in fact, he preached somewhere nearly every Sunday, beginning with his own Second Church in Boston. He considered himself a layman, but with a sort of roving commission to whatever churches might care to hear his message. His doctrinal position at this time may be illustrated by a few sentences from the sermon prepared for his former congregation. "The perspective of time, as it sets everything in the right view, does the same by Christianity. We learn to look at it now as a part of the history of the world; to see how it rests on the broad basis of man's moral nature, but is not itself that basis. I cannot but think that Jesus Christ will be better loved by not being adored. . . . Man begins to hear a voice that fills the heavens and the earth, saying that God is within him; that *there* is the celestial host. I find this amazing revelation of my immediate relation to God a solution to all the doubts that oppressed me. . . . It is the perception of this depth in human nature, this infinitude belonging to every man that has been born, which has given new value to the habits of reflection and solitude.

Besides lecturing in the pulpit, Emerson began, at once after his return, to lecture under secular

auspices, and these early courses given by him in Boston and elsewhere constitute an important factor in the early history of that Lyceum system which continued to be for more than half a century one of the most vitalizing influences in New England education. His first lectures, before various Boston societies, were upon scientific subjects. "The Uses of Natural History," "Water," and "The Relations of Man to the Globe" were their subjects. He also gave two lectures upon "Italy" during this first year of his return. Of course these scientific lectures were of a popular character, for Emerson, although he respected science, was not a specialist. But he had the poet's gift of insight, which is rarer and more precious than the specialist's knowledge, and he foresaw, as other poets of his time were foreseeing, the coming developments of scientific knowledge. Thus, a quarter-century before "The Origin of Species," he was ready with such an anticipation of the evolutionary doctrine as this: "Man is no upstart in the creation, but has been prophesied in nature for a thousand thousand ages before he appeared; from times incalculably remote, there has been a progressive preparation for him, an effort to produce him; the meaner creatures containing the elements of his structure and pointing at it from every side. . . . His limbs are only a more exquisite organization—say rather the finish—of the

dimental forms that have been already sweeping
e sea and creeping in the mud; the brother of his
nd is even now cleaving the Arctic Sea in the fin
the whale, and innumerable ages since was paw-
g the marsh in the flipper of the saurian." This
ust have sounded like wild speculation in 1833, to
e ears of a Boston audience.

His wife's family had been possessed of some
eans, and Emerson's share, after the settlement of
e estate, proved to be sufficient to provide an
sured income of about twelve hundred dollars.
his made a home again possible, and he deter-
ined to find it in Concord. He went there in
ctober, 1834, with his mother, and, at Dr. Ripley's
vitation, they took up their residence in the Old
anse—the house which had been built for Emer-
n's grandfather, in which Emerson had lived as
boy, and which was afterwards to acquire still
rther fame as the home of Nathaniel Hawthorne.
harles Emerson, who was expecting to marry a
oncord lady, had decided to live in that town, and
ere begin the practice of law. It was one of the
ndest hopes of the family that the circle might be
mpleted by Edward's return from Porto Rico.
ut the very month of the family removal to Con-
rd was the month of his death in the West Indies.
So falls one pile more of hope for this life," wrote
merson when he received the news, and to the

memory of the lost brother he afterwards inscribed these lines:

> "There is no record left on earth,
> Save on tablets of the heart,
> Of the rich, inherent worth,
> Of the grace that on him shone,
> Of eloquent lips, of joyful wit;
> He could not frame a word unfit,
> An act unworthy to be done."

It was a few months earlier in 1834 that Emerson wrote his first letter to Carlyle, thus beginning that correspondence of nearly forty years which has added so much to our knowledge of both men. This first letter gives us an interesting glimpse of the writer's ideas concerning current politics. "In the last six years government in the United States has been fast becoming a job, like great charities. A most unfit person in the Presidency has been doing the worst things; and the worse he grew, the more popular. Now things seem to mend. Webster, a good man and as strong as if he were a sinner, begins to find himself the centre of a great and enlarging party and his eloquence incarnated and enacted by them; yet men dare not hope that the majority shall be suddenly unseated." It is instructive to compare this opinion of Andrew Jackson with Irving's, uttered at about the same time. As for Webster, Emerson's admiration was again expressed in

he lines which he wrote as Phi Beta Kappa poet
t Harvard that summer:

"There, while hot heads perplexed with fears the state,
Calm as the morn the manly patriot sate;
Seemed, when at last his clarion accents broke,
As if the conscience of the country spoke.
Not on its base Monadnoc surer stood,
Than he to common sense and common good."

The town in which Emerson now elected to make
is abode was one with which he had both personal
nd traditional associations. The leader in the
ettlement of Concord was his ancestor, Peter
Bulkeley, of whom Cotton Mather wrote in the
'Magnalia Christi Americana": "To *New Eng-*
and he therefore came, in the Year 1635; and there
aving been for a while, at Cambridge, he carried
good Number of Planters with him, up further
nto the *Woods*, where they gathered the *Twelfth*
Church, then formed in the *Colony*, and call'd the
Town by the Name of *Concord*." Emerson's grand-
ather William had been minister of Concord, and
is widow had married Ezra Ripley, his successor.
t now remained for the descendant of this stock
o make the town, by taking up his permanent resi-
ence there, "the Delphi of New England." It
vas, then, as no stranger that the Concord towns-
nen welcomed the new-comer, conferred upon him
he dignity of hog-reeve, and invited him to make

the address upon the occasion of their second centennial celebration. This was September 12, 1835, and beside him on the platform sat some of the veterans who had been minute-men sixty years earlier. The address was a sober and matter-of-fact sketch of the town's history, with occasional touches of the picturesque. He said of the founders: "Many were their wants, but more their privileges. The light struggled in through windows of oiled paper, but they read the Word of God by it." And of the old town clerks: "They did not spell very correctly, but they contrive to make intelligible the will of a free and just community." It was in the April next following that Concord dedicated its monument to the heroes of the Revolution, and that Emerson wrote his "Concord Hymn," with its famous lines:

> "Here once the embattled farmers stood,
> And fired the shot heard round the world."

In March, 1835, writing to Carlyle, Emerson said: "In a few months, please God, at most, I shall have wife, house, and home wherewith and wherein to return your former hospitality." The prediction was soon fulfilled as to "wife, house, and home," but the opportunity to return Carlyle's hospitality never came. That summer he bought the house in which he lived for the rest of his life, and that fall

he married Lydia (which his whim changed to Lidian) Jackson of Plymouth. He called the house "a mean place," which it hardly was, since it had cost its original owner nearly eight thousand dollars; what he meant was that it needed trees and flowers and furnishings and friends to make it truly a home. His second wife was a sister of C. T. Jackson, the physician to whom the world owes an immense debt of gratitude for his share in the discovery of the anæsthetic uses of ether. The wedding took place at Plymouth, September 14, and the pair at once took possession of the new house, where they were joined by Charles and the mother.

Meanwhile, Emerson had been giving more lectures in Boston. In the early part of the year he gave a course of six, their subjects being Michelangelo, Luther, Milton, George Fox, and Burke. In August, he opened the meeting of the American Institute of Instruction with an address on "The best mode of inspiring a correct taste in English literature." It was an address of excellent counsel, quite as much needed in our own time as it was then. These passages are taken from Mr. Cabot's summary: "The first step towards a revolution in our state of society would be to impress men's minds with the fact that the purest pleasures of life are at hand, unknown to them; that whilst all manner of miserable books swarm like flies, the fathers of

counsel and of heroism, Shakspere, Bacon, Milton, and Taylor, lie neglected. . . . Accustom the pupil to a solitude, not of place, but of thought. Wean him from the traditionary judgments; save him wholly from that barren season of discipline which young men spend with the Aikins and Ketts and Drakes and Blairs; acquiring the false doctrine that there is something arbitrary or conventional in letters, something else in style than the transparent medium through which we should see new and good thoughts." The following winter, the subject of English literature was again taken up in a course of ten lectures which were warmly welcomed by their Boston audience.

In May, 1836, Emerson lost his brother Charles, "a soul so costly and so rare that few persons were capable of knowing its price," "a man of a beautiful genius, born to speak well, and whose conversation for these last years has treated every grave question of humanity, and has been my daily bread." He was to have been married in September, and to have become a member of the Concord household. But in the early spring of that year there were symptoms of pulmonary trouble, and it was decided that he should seek a milder climate. Waldo went with him as far as New York, and left him with his brother William, and their mother, then making a visit in New York. Returning to Salem, where he

was then lecturing, he was hurriedly summoned to New York again, but arrived too late to find his brother alive. The many beautiful passages consecrated to Charles in Waldo's letters and journals give evidence of a grief almost too sacred for discussion. Charles had been the closest to him of all the brothers, and no one ever quite took his place.

VI

For another reason, the year 1836 is epochal in Emerson's life, since it witnessed the publication of his first book. It was a small book, in blue covers, published anonymously, containing less than a hundred pages, and it was called "Nature." It had been in preparation for a long time, and a considerable part of it seems to have been written as early as 1833. It had for its motto this passage from Plotinus: "Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul; Nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know." Small as the book was, and devoid of any essential originality of thought, it nevertheless brought to a focus the ideas that had long been active in the author's mind, and in it may be found the germs of all that he afterwards wrote. The substance of its philosophy is that the soul has in itself the possibility of all knowledge, that Nature is God's agency for appealing

to the soul through the medium of the senses, but that God also comes into direct relations with the soul. "Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit, he that thinks most will say least. We can foresee God in the coarse, as it were, distant phenomena of matter; but when we try to define and describe Himself, both language and thought desert us, and we are as helpless as fools and savages. That essence refuses to be recorded in propositions, but when man has worshipped them intellectually, the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it." This is the philosophy of Herbert's poem, which the author quotes by way of illustration:

> "Man is one world and hath
> Another to attend him."

The little book did not have a large sale, but there were a few acute minds, in both the liberal and the orthodox camps, who recognized its significance, and took courage or alarm from it according to their respective religious affiliations.

The leading thought of "Nature," apart from its trappings of poetry and eloquence, has a readily traceable lineage. The philosophy of Hobbes and Locke had declared the senses to provide the entire

content of the intellect. Leibniz had suggested that this did not account for the recipient intellect itself. Berkeley had made his bold pronouncement that the world of seeming reality exists only in and for the subject which creates it; and upon these foundations Kant had reared the solid structure of his critical philosophy, with its distinction between "reason" and "understanding," between phenomenon and noumenon, between things in themselves and things as they appear in a universe upon which the mind has imposed its fundamental modes of thought. The Kantian philosophy, having for its kernel this doctrine of transcendental æsthetics, had been elaborated in the consciousness of Schelling and Fichte, and had received a rich romantic coloring. Coleridge had viewed it through his prismatic imagination, and had familiarized it in this refracted form to English readers. When it appeared in New England, in the writings of Emerson and his associates, it was promptly dubbed transcendentalism, although now far enough removed from what Kant had meant by that term. Anything more than this historical explanation of New England transcendentalism would be futile. The subject eludes definition and defies analysis. It was a temper rather than a theory, an aspiration rather than a philosophy. "What a benefit," said Emerson, "if a rule could be given whereby the mind, dreaming

amidst the gross fogs of matter, could at any moment *east* itself and find the sun!"

The first organization (if so pretentious a word may be permitted) of transcendentalism was found in a little gathering of earnest souls who met in Boston and the neighboring towns, and who continued thus to meet, at irregular intervals and with shifting membership, for several years. The first meeting of this informal club took place in September, 1836, and was attended by six persons, George Ripley, F. H. Hedge, J. F. Clarke, Convers Francis, Bronson Alcott, and Emerson. Other members were soon added, including W. H. Channing, C. A. Bartol, O. A. Brownson, Theodore Parker, Jones Very, Henry Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Elizabeth Peabody. They called themselves "the club of the like-minded," seemingly because, although no two of them thought alike, "they were united by a common impatience of routine thinking." At their meetings there was much philosophizing, which was doubtless profitable to all concerned, although probably not one of their number could be called a vigorous thinker along philosophical lines, and most of them knew only at second-hand the Germans with whose names they made so free.

It will be noticed that the above list of names includes those of Alcott, Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller—the three persons with whom Emerson is

chiefly associated in our minds, the minor prophets of the Concord dispensation. He had met Margaret Fuller in 1835, and the next year she made the first of her frequently repeated visits to the Emerson household. Alcott he had also met at about the same time, although he did not have him for a neighbor at Concord until 1840. Thoreau was born in Concord, was graduated from Harvard in 1837, and became Emerson's intimate from that time on. His attraction for Emerson seems to have followed from his possession of an individuality as pronounced as Emerson's own, rather than from a common basis of ideas and interests. In Emerson's relations with Margaret Fuller there was always a suggestion of reserve; he seems to have had a notion that she was trying to force the citadel of his personality, and he constructed intangible outworks for its defence. Of Alcott he had a very exalted opinion indeed, calling him "the highest genius of his time," an estimate which the world has been very far from accepting.

During the year 1836 Emerson was bestirring himself to make Carlyle known to the American public; as the result of his friendly efforts, "Sartor Resartus" was printed in Boston, and a considerable edition disposed of, some time before any English publisher was venturesome enough to make it into a book. Carlyle was urgently invited to make a lecture-visit to the United States, and for

a time thought seriously of doing so. This year also gave birth to Emerson's first child, whom he called Waldo, "a lovely wonder that made the Universe look friendlier to me." Toward the close of the year, Emerson began in Boston a course of twelve lectures on "The Philosophy of Modern History." He discoursed *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, and whimsically wrote in his journal "I mean to insist that whatsoever elements of humanity have been the subjects of my studies constitute the indisputable core of Modern History." Of his daily routine at this time and for long afterwards, Mr. Cabot gives the following account: "The morning was his time of work, and he took care to guard it from all disturbance. He rose early and went to his study, where he remained until dinner-time, one o'clock, and in the afternoon went to walk. In the evening he was with his family, sometimes reading aloud, or went to his study again, but never worked late, thinking sleep to be a prime necessity for health of body and of mind. He was a sound sleeper, and never got up at night, as some one has fancied, to jot down thoughts which then occurred to him."

Emerson's first public address which was something more than a sermon or a lecture was the famous oration on "The American Scholar," given before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard

College, August 31, 1837. It was a ringing appeal to the youthful American mind to cast off the shackles of tradition, to think for itself, and thereby to create a new nation of men "inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men." It asserted the obligation of individualism in the most impressive terms. "If the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him." Let not the scholar "quit his belief that a pop-gun is a pop-gun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom." The conclusion of this oration was marked by these ringing periods: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame. Politics and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat. The scholar is decent, indolent, complaisant. See already the tragic consequence. The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself. There is no work for any but the decorous and the complaisant. . . . Is it not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit; not to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the

north, or the south? Not so, brother and friends, please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. The study of letters shall be no longer a name for pity, for doubt, and for sensual indulgence. The dread of man and the love of man shall be a wall of defence and a wreath of joy around all. A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men." Dr. Holmes called this address our intellectual Declaration of Independence, and its inspiring quality was such that it deserved the title. "We were still socially and intellectually moored to English thought," says Lowell, "till Emerson cut the cable and gave us a chance at the dangers and the glories of blue water." And Lowell's frequently-quoted words are those which best enable us to understand the impression which the address made. It "was an event without any former parallel in our literary annals, a scene to be always treasured in the memory for its picturesqueness and its inspiration. What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of foregone dissent! It was our Yankee version of a lecture by Abelard, our Harvard parallel to the last public appearances of Schelling." How the oration impressed Carlyle may be seen in a few words from

the letter in which he acknowledged its receipt. "Lo, out of the West comes a clear utterance, clearly recognizable as a *man's* voice, and I *have* a kinsman and brother: God be thanked for it! I could have *wept* to read that speech; the clear high melody of it went tingling through my heart. My brave Emerson! And all this has been lying silent, quite tranquil in him, these seven years, and the 'vociferous platitude' dinning his ears on all sides, and he quietly answering no word; and a whole world of Thought has silently built itself in these calm depths, and, the day being come, says quite softly, as if it were a common thing, 'Yes, I *am* here too.' "

A year later, Emerson made another public appearance of equal, if not greater significance. The graduating class of the Divinity School at Cambridge called upon him for an address, which he prepared, and delivered Sunday evening, July 15, 1838. It began with the passage which is one of Emerson's purple patches, and which set the pitch for the discourse that followed: "In this refulgent Summer, it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life. The grass grows, the buds burst, the meadow is spotted with fire and gold in the tint of flowers. The air is full of birds, and sweet with the breath of the pine, the balm of Gilead, and the new hay. Night brings no gloom to the heart with its welcome shade. Through the transparent darkness the stars pour their almost

spiritual rays. Man under them seems a young child, and his huge globe a toy. The cool night bathes the world as with a river, and prepares his eyes again for the crimson dawn." Thus persuasively opened the address which fluttered the dove-cotes of New England orthodoxy as they had never been fluttered before, which proved even too heretical for the acceptance of the speaker's former Unitarian associates, and which so stirred up the waters of controversy that they remained troubled for long years afterwards. Emerson's fundamental ideas about religion had been slowly elaborated, but they were at last ripe for expression, and in this address they were set forth in the terms to which he essentially adhered for the rest of his life. His own deprecation of consistency as the hobgoblin of little minds must be taken with considerable allowance; few men have held so consistently as he to the broad underlying principles of their philosophy.

The eloquent preamble in praise of the beauty of nature soon gives place to a deeper vein of thought. "When the mind opens, and reveals the laws which traverse the universe, and make things what they are, then shrinks the great world at once into a mere illustration and fable of the mind." Then intrudes upon it the "sentiment of virtue," the intuition of the moral nature, the overwhelming sense of God as no external power but an immanent presence in the

universe and in ourselves. This thought is no product of the mere understanding, it is the gift of the transcendental reason. Religions are created at the hest of the reason, and are clothed by it with symbols to make them accessible to the understanding. Then tradition gathers about the symbols, and invests them with sanctity; authority usurps the place of intuition; churches and creeds become established; "the doctrine of inspiration is lost; the base doctrine of the majority of voices usurps the place of the doctrine of the soul." This has been the history of all religions, of the religion of Christ no less than the others. "The idioms of his language and the figures of his rhetoric have usurped the place of his truth, and churches are not built on his principles, but on his tropes. Christianity became a Mythus, as the poetic teaching of Greece and Egypt, before. He spoke of Miracles, for he felt that man's life was a miracle, and he knew that this miracle shines as the character ascends. But the word Miracle, as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression; it is Monster. It is not one with the blowing clover and the falling rain." Then followed a survey of historical Christianity, boldly pointing out its defects, but warmly praising two of its institutions,—the Sabbath and the pulpit. But the pulpit, Emerson complained, had fallen into formalism, and no longer discharged its higher

functions. Then came a direct appeal to his auditors, young men who were soon to fill pulpits, that they should preach the spirit and not the letter, "and acquaint men at first hand with Deity." And the peroration of the address vied in eloquence with the preamble. "I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty, which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, and chiefly of those Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the West also. The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures contain immortal sentences, that have been bread of life to millions. But they have no epical integrity; are fragmentary; are not shown in their order to the intellect. I look for the new Teacher, that shall follow so far those shining laws, that he shall see them come full circle; shall see their rounding complete grace; shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul; shall see the identity of the law of gravitation with purity of heart; and shall show that the Ought, that Duty, is one thing with Science, with Beauty, and with Joy."

The "tempest in a wash-bowl" stirred up by this address was surprising to Emerson, and far from agreeable, because it seemed to make him a much more conspicuous public figure than he wished to be. The winds of orthodox doctrine blew great guns for a time, and then subsided into angry mutterings. The chief gunner who directed the storm

(if the familiar nautical phrase may justify this mixture of metaphor) was the theologian Andrews Norton, who, after pronouncing anathema upon the whole crew of transcendentalists and their "ill-understood notions, obtained by blundering, at second-hand, through the crabbed and disgusting obscurity of the worst German speculatists," went on to say: "The state of things described might seem a mere insurrection of folly, a sort of Jack Cade rebellion, which must soon be put down, if those engaged in it were not gathering confidence from neglect, and had not proceeded to attack principles which are the foundation of human society and human happiness. Silly women and silly young men, it is to be feared, have been drawn away from their Christian faith, if not divorced from all that can properly be called religion." Emerson was then specifically assailed, and it was explained that responsibility for his "insult to religion" was to be placed, not upon the authorities of the Divinity School, but upon the young students who had been reckless enough to invite him to address them. There were many other attacks, but whatever their lack of urbanity, they left Emerson's serenity unruffled. He wrote to his brother that "the Cambridge address has given plentiful offence, and will, until nine days are out." And in his journal he said: "Analyze the chiding opposition, and it is made up

of such timidities, uncertainties and no-opinions that it is not worth dispersing." "I can very well afford to be accounted bad or foolish by a few dozen or a few hundred persons,—I who see myself greeted by the good expectation of so many friends, far beyond any power of thought or communication of thought residing in me."

It would not be particularly profitable, at this late day, to discuss in further detail the controversy occasioned by the Divinity School address. It lasted for years, and occasioned a polemic torrent from the pulpit and periodical press, in pamphlets and books. It alienated from Emerson the Harvard influence for a whole generation, and deprived him of further honors from his *alma mater* until after the Civil War. Mr. F. B. Sanborn says: "When I entered Harvard College in 1852, just midway of this thirty years' war against the heretics and reformers, the readers of Emerson were but a feeble minority in the four hundred students who then gathered there, and the faculty of some thirty members had but half-a-dozen of the Emersonian school among them." The antagonism to Emerson represents what is now so evidently an *überwundener Standpunkt* that it is difficult for us to realize how bitter it was three-quarters of a century ago. But while listening to the echoes from that distant past, a word should be said about Emerson's correspon-

dence with Henry Ware, who had been his colleague in the Second Church. Ware felt it his duty to make a public reply to Emerson, but was at the same time unhappy at finding himself opposed to one whom he both esteemed and loved. The letters exchanged by the two men at this time are couched in terms of the utmost friendliness, and the following quotation from Emerson's reply to Ware is most instructive: "I well know there is no scholar less willing or less able than myself to be a polemic. I could not give an account of myself, if challenged. I could not possibly give you one of the 'arguments' you cruelly hint at, on which any doctrine of mine stands; for I do not know what arguments are in reference to any expression of a thought. I delight in telling what I think; but if you ask me how I dare say so, I am the most helpless of mortal men." With this letter Emerson practically disappeared from any personal connection with the controversy. The "polemic" that he could not constrain himself to be soon arose in the person of a younger man, Theodore Parker, "the right arm in the conflict," as Dr. Holmes calls him.

In November of the year preceding, Emerson had made, in Concord, his first public address on the subject of "Slavery," and in December had begun his Boston course of ten lectures on "Human Culture." In March, 1838, he had lectured on "War" before

the American Peace Society. Then followed the Divinity School address in July, and a few days later in the same month, an oration on "Literary Ethics," given before the literary societies of Dartmouth College. The College was a conservative stronghold uninfected by liberalism, but it did not seem to discover the cloven hoof of its guest, for the Cambridge excitement of the week before had not yet spread to New Hampshire. Dr. Holmes makes this amusing comment on the situation: "If there were any drops of false or questionable doctrine in the silver shower of eloquence under which they had been sitting, the plumage of orthodoxy glistened with unctuous repellents, and a shake or two in coming out of church left the sturdy old dogmatists as dry as ever." The matter of this oration was not especially perilous, and its counsel was of the noblest. To the youth who says, "I must eat the good of the land, and let learning and romantic expectations go, until a more convenient season," there were given these solemn words of warning: "Then dies the man in you; then once more perish the buds of art, and poetry, and science, as they have died already in a thousand thousand men. . . . Why should you renounce your right to traverse the starlit deserts of truth, for the premature comforts of an acre, house, and barn? Truth also has its roof and house and board. Make yourself

necessary to the world, and mankind will give you bread; and if not store of it, yet such as shall not take away your property in all men's possessions, in all men's affections, in art, in nature, and in hope."

How well Emerson's practice squared with his precept may be shown from a letter written to Carlyle in this same year. "I occupy, or *improve*, as we Yankees say, two acres only of God's earth; on which is my house, my kitchen-garden, my orchard of thirty young trees, my empty barn. My house is now a very good one for comfort, and abounding in room. Besides my house, I have, I believe, $22,000, whose income in ordinary years is six per cent. I have no other tithe or glebe except the income of my winter lectures, which was last winter $800. Well, with this income, here at home, I am a rich man. I stay at home and go abroad at my own instance. I have food, warmth, leisure, books, friends." The ideal of "plain living and high thinking" thus pictured is what long kept New England in the spiritual forefront of our national life; it is an ideal that has almost wholly vanished from our civilization, and no thinking person can fail to be filled with a sense of wistful regret at thought of what has been lost.

Upon the "friends," in particular, last named in the enumeration of his goods, Emerson put much stress. Some of them have already been named;

others, such as Jones Very, Ellery Channing, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, will occur to most readers. Channing, who married Margaret Fuller's younger sister, wrote to Emerson, explaining his choice of Concord for a home, in these terms: "I have but one reason for settling in one place in America; it is because you are there. I not only have no preference for any place, but I do not know that I should ever be able to settle upon any place, if you were not living. I came to Concord attracted by you; because your mind, your talents, your cultivation, are superior to those of any man I know, living or dead." Many others, less known to fame, found Emerson a lodestone to draw them to the place where he lived. Hawthorne has described these moths fluttering about the candle in a striking passage. "Young visionaries to whom just so much of insight had been imparted as to make life all a labyrinth around them, came to seek the clue that should lead them out of their self-involved bewilderment. Gray-headed theorists—whose systems, at first air, had imprisoned them in an iron framework—travelled painfully to his door, not to ask deliverance, but to invite his free spirit into their own thraldom. People that had lighted on a new thought, or a thought that they fancied new, came to Emerson, as the finder of a glittering gem hastens to a lapidary to ascertain its value." Many of these visitors went away dis-

appointed, for they could not "draw out" their host, or involve him in argument about subjects that did not interest him. He listened to them courteously, but with imperturbable serenity, and they departed with a sense of being baffled. Even Margaret Fuller and Alcott complained of his aloofness, and he himself said that there were "fences" between him and some of his dearest friends.

In the case of Hawthorne, who in 1842 took up his residence in the Old Manse, there seems to have been a much higher "fence" than was to be expected. Here were two men—perhaps the two greatest writers that America has produced—living for many years as fellow-townsmen, and never coming into anything like intimacy. It was a case of mutually defective sympathy, accentuated by Hawthorne's shyness and Emerson's indifference to matters that he found uninteresting. The record shows numerous casual meetings, and one long walk together. Each respected the other, but at a distance. Hawthorne wrote that "it was good to meet him in the wood paths or sometimes in our avenue with that pure intellectual gleam diffusing about his presence like the garment of a shining one." And Emerson wrote after Hawthorne's death: "I thought him a greater man than any of his words betray; there was still a great deal of work in him, and he might one day show a purer power.

Moreover, I have felt sure of him, in his neighborhood and in his necessities of sympathy and intelligence,—that I could well wait his time, his unwillingness and caprice, and might one day conquer a friendship. . . . I do not think any of his books worthy of his genius. I admired the man, who was simple, amiable, truth-loving, and frank in conversation, but I never read his books with pleasure; they are too young." This offers a very curious illustration of Emerson's most serious limitation. Literature was to him the vehicle of thought and spiritual expression; its form meant little to him, and of what men know as art he had a very imperfect notion.

In December, 1838, Emerson began another course of lectures in Boston. They were ten in number, and "Human Life" was their vague general designation. These lecture-courses had come to be a regular feature of the Boston season, and continued to be so for many years. The subject of the succeeding course (1839–1840) was "The Present Age," another conveniently vague caption. While this course was going on, an address was given at East Lexington for the dedication of a new church. Ibsen's Brand would have found a kindred soul in the Emerson who preached that a "church is not builded when the last clapboard is laid, but then first when the consciousness of union with the Supreme

Soul dawns in the lowly heart of the worshipper." In August, 1841, an address on "The Method of Nature" was given at Waterville College in Maine. A few days before, he had written to Carlyle: "As usual at this season of the year, I, incorrigible spouting Yankee, am writing an oration to deliver to the boys in one of our little country colleges." The purport of this lecture is that nature represents tendency rather than finality, that "it does not exist to any one, or to any number of particular ends," and that it "obeys that redundancy or excess of life which in conscious beings we call ecstasy." Thus viewed *sub specie æternitatis*, nature presents a model for human life, and men should take heed lest they attach too much importance to the specific aims toward which they strive. "I say to you plainly there is no end to which your practical faculty can aim so sacred or so large, that if pursued for itself, will not at last become carrion and an offence to the nostril. The imaginative faculty of the soul must be fed with objects immense and eternal." Probably the college boys did not make much out of this, but it is highly significant in the light of his teaching in general, and particularly in view of what often seemed his indifference to the burning questions of the hour.

He was at times, however, aroused out of this indifference by some exigent crisis. In 1838, his

indignation flamed out into a letter to President Van Buren protesting against the forced removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia. It is hardly the gentle Emerson of the "Essays" who uses such language as this: "We only state the fact, that a crime is projected that confounds our understanding by its magnitude, a crime that really deprives us, as well as the Cherokees, of a country; for how could we call the conspiracy that should crush these poor Indians, our government, or the land that was cursed by their parting and dying imprecations, our country, any more? You, sir, will bring down that renowned chair in which you sit into infamy if your seal is set to this instrument of perfidy; and the name of the nation, hitherto the sweet omen of religion and liberty, will stink to the world." Writing in his journal the next day, he said: "Yesterday went the letter to Van Buren—a letter hated of me; a deliverance that does not deliver the soul. I write my journal, I read my lecture with joy; but this stirring in the philanthropic mud gives me no peace." We shall see later, as the question of slavery gradually came to occupy the foremost place among subjects of public interest, with what courageous words (and even acts) Emerson allied himself with the cause of human freedom.

In the years 1839 and 1841, respectively, two more children, both girls, were born to the Emerson

household. But early in 1842, a few months after the second of these births, the boy Waldo died, soon after entering upon his sixth year. "A perfect little boy," the father called him in his next letter to Carlyle. "You can never sympathize with me; you can never know how much of me such a young child can take away. A few weeks ago I accounted myself a very rich man, and now the poorest of all. What would it avail to tell you anecdotes of a sweet and wonderful boy, such as we solace and sadden ourselves with every morning and evening? From a perfect health and as happy a life and as happy influences as ever child enjoyed, he was hurried out of my arms in three short days by Scarlatina. . . . How often I have pleased myself that one day I should send to you this Morning Star of mine, and stay at home so gladly behind such a representative." The touching "Threnody" of the "Poems" is the lasting memorial of this bereavement.

VII

One of Emerson's first ideas after his formal resignation from the ministry had been to start a magazine. "Am I not to have a magazine of my ownty-donty," he wrote to his brother, "scorning co-operation and taking success by storm? The vice of these undertakings in general is that they

depend on many contributors, who all speak an average sense, and no one of them utters his own individuality. Yet that the soul of a man should speak out, and not the soul general of the town or town-pump, is essential to all eloquence. . . . Wait and see what a few months shall do to hatch this fine egg." The months passed, and the years, but no magazine was born. The idea, however, was persistent, and from time to time we get glimpses of it in the letters and journals. "We aspire to have a work on the First Philosophy in Boston," he wrote to Carlyle in 1835. The subject was a good deal discussed during the following years in the "transcendentalist" symposia. It was even suggested that Carlyle might be persuaded to come to America and become the editor of such a periodical. "A concert of singing mice with a savage and hungry old grimalkin as leader of the orchestra!" is the way in which Dr. Holmes comments upon this suggestion. At last, the energy of Margaret Fuller supplied the necessary impetus, and "The Dial" was born in July, 1840. It was described as a quarterly magazine for literature, philosophy, and religion. Miss Fuller assumed the editorship and George Ripley undertook the business management. So far from conforming with Emerson's earlier notion of an organ for the expression of his own individuality, "The Dial," as actually projected, was thought of

by Emerson chiefly as a means of persuading the public to appreciate the hitherto unrecognized merits of his friends, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, Henry Thoreau, and a few others.

The prospectus of "The Dial" described it as "a medium for the freest expression of thought on the questions which interest earnest minds in every community." The "discussion of principles" rather than the "promotion of measures" was to be its aim, and its contributors were to "possess little in common but the love of intellectual freedom and the hope of social progress." It was to resemble the instrument from which its name was taken in "measuring no hours but those of sunshine," and was to speak with a "cheerful rational voice amidst the din of mourners and polemics." The impression it made upon Carlyle was of a creature "all spirit-like, aëriform, aurora-borealis-like," and he asked: "Will no *Angel* body himself out of that; no stalwart Yankee *man*, with color in the cheeks of him, and a coat on his back!" Emerson's program of untrammeled freedom on the part of contributors worked out to bewildering effect, as far as the public was concerned, while as to himself, his biographer tells us that "he winced at the violations of literary form, and confessed, in strict confidence, that he found some of the numbers unreadable." "The Dial" was published quarterly, and lasted for four

years. The price of subscription was three dollars, and there was no thought of paying for contributions or editorial services. But even under these conditions it ran steadily into debt, and when it expired, after changing its publishers several times, it left Emerson several hundred dollars out of pocket. The responsibility of editorial management also rested upon his shoulders after the first two years, when Miss Fuller's health failed, and the combined burdens became too great for him to bear. "Poor 'Dial'—it has not pleased any mortal," he wrote dejectedly when the end was near, "and yet, though it contains a deal of matter I would gladly spare, I yet value it as a portfolio which preserves and conveys to distant persons precisely what I should borrow and transcribe to send them if I could."

Dr. Garnett reminds us that among the last utterances of "The Dial" was the precept to "energise about the Hecatic sphere," and suggests that its contributors were of the type of the apocryphal lady who once put the question to Alcott: "Does omnipotence abnegate attribute?" A great deal of this sort of fun was poked at the periodical in its own days, and it still tempts to similar jesting. Nevertheless, "The Dial" has a very important place in the history of American literature. Besides much that is merely Orphic or long-winded, its pages reveal to us many an essay or poem that now ranks

as a sort of classic. It exhibited Emerson himself for the first time as a poet, and it first published some of his best-known essays. It gave Thoreau his opportunity, and first introduced him to the public. It contained some of the best writings of Margaret Fuller, Theodore Parker, and the younger Channings. It published important pieces of translation, and helped not a little to direct the stream of New England culture into cosmopolitan channels. It exerted a stimulating influence upon the whole group of New England writers, and we can now see it to have been a very genuine if incalculable force for intellectual and moral good.

The ferment which led to the establishment of "The Dial" found another mode of expression in the community experiment of Brook Farm, which took shape in 1841 and was carried on until its "Phalanstery" was destroyed by fire in 1846. Emerson had written to Carlyle in 1840 to the following effect: "We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket. I am gently mad myself, and am resolved to live cleanly." But although Brook Farm aroused Emerson's respectful interest, his ingrained individualism made it impossible for him to take part in the experiment, and his relations with it were only "tangential." He loved the men and women who

joined to form the community, but he had a clear sense of the defects and even absurdities inherent in any such plan; when he summed it up long afterwards, he admitted that Brook Farm must have been an agreeable place to live in, and that it had an educative and refining influence upon the associated "farmers." But he adds, in good-natured disparagement, that "it was a perpetual picnic, a French Revolution in small, an Age of Reason in a patty-pan."

It was during the "Dial" years that Emerson collected and published the two series of "Essays," the volumes appearing in 1841 and 1844, respectively. "My little raft," he calls the first collection, "no shipbuilding, no clipper, smack, nor skiff even, only boards and logs tied together." It is a modest description, but a fairly accurate one, not only of this first volume, but also of each volume that was to follow. And although the raft was a fabric of imperfectly related parts—of random aphorisms and examples—it bore a freight of rich and penetrating thought. Many of the essays had already done duty as lectures; others were pieced together from the author's note-books; all were made remarkable by their diamond-like qualities of incisive edge and refractive brilliancy. The two volumes comprised about a score of essays, among which were numbered such famous papers as "His-

tory," "Self-Reliance," "Compensation," "Friendship," "Heroism," and "The Over-Soul." They were the volumes which first made Emerson known to the larger public at home, and which first (through Carlyle's friendly offices) introduced him to English readers. They proved the cause of much bewilderment to minds of stolid and pragmatic type, but speedily won the suffrages of the elect, and established their author's position as a thinker and literary artist with whom it was necessary henceforth to reckon.

A passage from the essay on "Self-Reliance" may be here reproduced for the double purpose of illustrating the style and the thought of the man who thus made his formal entrance into our classical literature. "Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what it is, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master who could have taught Shakespeare? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great man is an unique. The Scipionism of Scipio is precisely that part he could not borrow. If anybody will tell me whom the great

man imitates in the original crisis when he performs a great act, I will tell him who else than himself can teach him. Shakespeare will never be made by the study of Shakespeare. Do that which is assigned thee, and thou canst not hope too much or dare too much. There is at this moment, there is for me an utterance bare and grand as that of the colossal chisel of Phidias, or trowel of the Egyptians, or the pen of Moses, or Dante, but different from all these. Not possibly will the soul all rich, all eloquent, with thousand-cloven tongue, deign to repeat itself; but if I can hear what these patriarchs say, surely I can reply to them in the same pitch of voice: for the ear and the tongue are two organs of one nature. Dwell up there in the simple and noble regions of thy life, and thou shalt reproduce the Foreworld again." Here is the central core of all Emerson's teaching, the confession of his steadfast faith in the power of sincere and conscious individual purpose.

In 1847, the "Essays" were followed by the "Poems." Emerson had been writing fragmentary verse for many years, and some of the pieces had circulated widely among his friends. During the "Dial" period a number of his poems appeared in the pages of that periodical, and thus reached a wider, although not too wide, public. As early as 1839, he had sent a copy of the "Rhodora" verses to J. F. Clarke, who had asked for them, and with

them these reflections: "It is strange, seeing the delight we take in verses, that we can so seldom write them, and so are not ashamed to lay up old ones, say sixteen years, instead of improvising them as freely as the wind blows, whenever we and our brothers are attuned to music. I have heard of a citizen who made an annual joke. I believe I have in April or May an annual poetic *conatus* rather than *afflatus*, experimenting to the length of thirty lines or so, if I may judge from the dates of the rhythmical scraps I detect among my MSS. I look upon this incontinence as merely the redundancy of a susceptibility to poetry which makes all the bards my daily treasures, and I can well run the risk of being ridiculous once a year for the benefit of happy reading all the other days." The poem which accompanied this letter is one of the best-known and most characteristic of Emerson's shorter pieces.

"In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:

Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there brought you."

It was not the charge of ridicule so much as that of obscurity which the "Poems" had to meet when they were finally put into a volume. They proved to be more quintessential in their presentation of the author's thought than the "Essays" had been, while the poetry of his contemporaries was nothing if not obvious. The reader of our later days has had more training in poetic subtlety, and finds no particular difficulty in understanding even so cryptic an utterance as the "Brahma" stanzas — that stumbling-block of the literal-minded in an earlier generation. Emerson's view of the poetic function was the highest and most serious possible; his was

"No jingling serenader's art,
Nor tinkle of piano-strings,"

and the world has come to value his verses more and more with every succeeding year. We now see that he had the poetic gift in the truest sense, and that his performance, while it does not compare in bulk with that of Longfellow, or Whittier, or Lowell, is touched, at its best, with the spark of a finer imagination than was theirs, and exhibits qualities of style that were beyond their reach. He called him-

self "half a bard," but his half is better than the whole of many a poet of wider popularity.

During these years of the "Dial" and the "Essays" and the "Poems," Emerson had steadily pursued the task of the lecturer. Hardly a year passed in which he did not give a new course, besides occasional addresses. Many of the courses and single lectures were repeated in various cities and towns, and the speaker thus became personally known to great numbers of his fellow-countrymen. The courses of this period included eight on "The Times" (1841–1842), five on "New England" (1843), and seven on "Representative Men" (1845–1846). Notable single addresses were "The Young American" (1844), "Emancipation in the West Indies" (1844), "The Scholar" (1845), and "Eloquence" (1847). Poets and philosophers must earn their living, like other people, and lecturing was Emerson's way of earning his. He did not always like to do it, "to go peddling with my literary pack of notions," as he put it, and his distaste for the business once drew from him the petulant question: "Are not lectures a kind of Peter Parley's story of Uncle Plato, and a puppet show of the Eleusinian mysteries?" It took, moreover, a good deal of lecturing to support a family, even in plain Concord, and with no rent to pay for the home; the stipend for an evening on the platform was frequently not more than ten dol-

lars, and rarely exceeded fifty. During these years Emerson also made some additions to his modest country estate, and his family life was enriched by the birth, in 1844, of a son, Edward Waldo, to fill the place of the boy who had died two or three years before.

In 1847, a new periodical, "The Massachusetts Quarterly Review," was started in Boston as a more robust successor to "The Dial." Emerson wrote the inaugural address, and his name remained attached to the journal for some time as that of an editor, although he wrote no more in its pages. The real editor was Theodore Parker, who indulged in harder theological hitting than a true transcendentalist would have thought seemly. This was the year in which Emerson, yielding to the blandishments of some English friends who were insistent that he should come and lecture before English audiences, made his second journey abroad, fifteen years after the first one. He sailed from Boston on October 5, and reached Liverpool after a voyage of seventeen days. He remained until the following July, spending what were probably the busiest eight months of his life in a round of social functions and sight-seeing, with lectures interspersed. Before taking up his duties, he hastened to Chelsea, and renewed the acquaintance with Carlyle begun fourteen years earlier. His lecture engagements took him to Edin-

burgh, Liverpool, Manchester, and many provincial towns, and finally to London. Here his discourses attracted less attention than they had elsewhere, a fact due, at least in part, to the Chartist agitation, then at its height. Before addressing his London audiences, he went to Paris, also seething with revolutionary excitement, and enjoyed the human spectacle to the full, besides seeing many interesting people.

Emerson's English experiences upon this visit were very different from what they had been before. Upon the earlier occasion he had been an obscure young man, presenting his own credentials; the second visit found him a sort of celebrity, and he was showered with attentions. He describes himself as "dining out in a great variety of companies, seeing shilling shows, attending scientific and other societies, seeing picture-galleries, operas, and theatres." It was a novel life for a simple citizen of Concord, and he took to it with no little zest. He called upon Wordsworth, finding him, at seventy-seven, "a fine healthy old man, with a weather-beaten face." He was a guest at the famous "breakfasts" of Rogers and Milnes. He had pleasant meetings with Tennyson, Dickens, Macaulay, Clough, De Quincey, Patmore, Hunt, Froude, and a host of lesser men of letters, to say nothing of scientists, philosophers, and statesmen. One meeting is pleasantly recounted by Dr. Garnett. "He made a pilgrimage to Strat-

ford-on-Avon with a party from Coventry, among them a very plain young woman who told him that she liked Rousseau's 'Confessions' best of all his books. He started; then said, 'so do I;' and the plain young woman wrote next day that the American stranger was the one real man she had seen. He had had his first and last meeting with George Eliot." How he impressed another English observer of the discriminating sort may be read in the diary of the veteran Crabb Robinson. "It was with a feeling of pre-determined dislike that I had the curiosity to look at Emerson at Lord Northampton's a fortnight ago; when in an instant all my dislike vanished. He has one of the most interesting countenances I ever beheld,—a combination of intelligence and sweetness that quite disarmed me. . . . He conquers minds as well as hearts wherever he goes, and without convincing anybody's reason of any one thing, exalts their reason and makes their minds of more worth than they ever were before." What Emerson thought of the people among whom he had been sojourning is characteristically said in these parting words: "I leave England with an increased respect for the Englishman. His stuff or substance seems to be the best of the world. I forgive him all his pride. My respect is the more generous that I have no sympathy with him, only an admiration."

Upon his return from England, Emerson again

took up the work of lecturing, and extended the field of his engagements until he had a clientèle stretching all the way from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, and a Western journey in the winter became an almost annual feature of his life for the next score of years. His radius reached to St. Louis, Galena, and Milwaukee. Traveling in the West was no easy matter in the 'fifties, and his letters make frequent note of its discomforts and hardships. Here is a complaint from Pittsburg: "I arrived here last night after a very tedious and disagreeable journey from Philadelphia, by railway and canal, with little food and less sleep; two nights being spent in the rail-cars and the third on the floor of a canal-boat, where the cushion allowed me for a bed was crossed at the knees by another tier of sleepers as long-limbed as I, so that in the air was a wreath of legs; and the night, which was bad enough, would have been far worse but that we were so thoroughly tired we could have slept standing." Even after reaching Pittsburg, there was no rest for Emerson, who wanted to go straight to bed, but was hustled off to the lecture-hall instead, where he delivered himself of "poor old 'England' once more." Two years later, we hear from him at the capital of Illinois, whence he writes: "It rains and thaws incessantly, and if we step off the short street we go up to the shoulders, perhaps, in mud. My chamber is a

cabin; my fellow-boarders are legislators; two or three governors or ex-governors live in the house." And as late as 1867 he tells of crossing the Mississippi in a skiff, dodging the ice-floes or pulling the boat over them, himself almost congealed to ice before the other side was reached.

During these years of industrious lecturing, Emerson was also adding to the number of his printed books. "Nature: Addresses and Lectures" was published in 1849, and "Representative Men" in the year following. That was also the year of Margaret Fuller's tragic death on Fire Island beach, and he joined with W. H. Channing and J. F. Clarke in writing the memoirs of that gifted woman. In 1856, the lectures on England, having done duty on many a platform, were made into the book called "English Traits." The lectures on "The Conduct of Life," first given at Pittsburg in 1851, were published as a volume in 1860.

Emerson's mother, as we have seen, died in 1853, after he had been blessed by her companionship for a full half-century. She died in his house, where her home had been since his marriage, and there was "one less room to go to for sure society in the house." She had "kept her heart and mind clear, and her own, until the end." Writing to Carlyle, the son says: "It is very necessary that we should have mothers—we that read and write—to keep us

from becoming paper. I had found that age did not make that she should die without causing me pain. In my journeying lately, when I think of home the heart is taken out."

VIII

We must now turn back a little to review Emerson's relation to the one great public cause upon which he was outspoken and uncompromising. During the early 'thirties the abolitionist agitation, under the single-hearted leadership of Garrison, became a serious factor in our political life, and was destined from that time on to gain momentum steadily, until at last it should draw the lines of that "irrepressible conflict" which was to rend the nation with civil war. At first, Emerson refused to be drawn into the struggle, for it appeared to him to represent merely one aspect of that passion for reforming society which he was temperamentally unfitted to share, and which was productive of excesses in thought and action that he found highly distasteful. He held, as Ibsen at a later day, that all external reforms were trumpery, and that a regeneration of the human spirit should be the aim of the philosopher having the lasting welfare of society at heart. This regeneration was his special task, and he looked askance at movements that

were tarred with the stick of too much practicality. Nevertheless, he could not fail to recognize the deep devotion of the early abolitionists to their cause, nor could he withhold from them a certain measure of his sympathy. And as the years went on, his sympathy was given in more and more generous measure, until at last the time came when there was "an infamy in the air," and he spoke his mind, declaring himself a fighter in the cause of human liberty.

Emerson's first public words on the subject of slavery were spoken in 1837, when he addressed a Concord audience. He was chiefly moved to this utterance by the spirit of intolerance which at that time made it almost impossible for the abolitionists to find platforms for their public meetings in New England. Churches and public halls were alike closed to the agitation, and it was rather as a champion of free discussion than of freedom in the abstract that he was prevailed upon to take up the question of slavery at all. "When we have distinctly settled for ourselves the right and the wrong of this question," he said, "and have covenanted with ourselves to keep the channels of opinion open, each man for himself, I think we have done all that is incumbent on most of us to do. Sorely as we may feel the wrongs of the poor slave in Carolina or in Cuba, we have each of us our hands full of much nearer

duties." Three years later, he wrote these words in his journal: "Does he not do more to abolish slavery who works all day steadily in his own garden than he who goes to the abolition-meeting and makes a speech? He who does his own work frees a slave. He who does not his own work is a slave-holder." In his speeches of 1844 and 1845 on West Indian emancipation, he took more advanced ground, referring to the hitherto unsuspected capabilities of the negro race, and displaying some sense of the gravity of the situation. "Whatever may appear at the moment, however contrasted the fortunes of the black and the white, yet is the planter's an unsafe and an unblest condition. Nature fights on the other side, and as power is ever stealing from the idle to the busy hand, it seems inevitable that a revolution is preparing, at no distant day, to set these disjointed matters right."

After Emerson's return from Europe in 1848, he found the crisis appreciably nearer. In 1850 a peace which was no peace was patched up by the adoption in Congress of Clay's compromise measure. That compromise included the Fugitive Slave Law, and Webster, the idol of Massachusetts, had by its advocacy stepped from his pedestal in the conscience of his fellow-countrymen. In 1851, Emerson spoke to the citizens of Concord in plain terms. "The last year has forced us all into politics. There is an

infamy in the air. I wake in the morning with a painful sensation which I carry about all day, and which, when traced home, is the odious remembrance of that ignominy which has fallen on Massachusetts. I have lived all my life in this State, and never had any experience of personal inconvenience from the laws until now. They never came near me, to my discomfort, before. But the Act of Congress of September 18, 1850, is a law which every one of you will break on the earliest occasion—a law which no man can obey or abet the obeying without loss of self-respect and forfeiture of the name of a gentleman." And in the journal of that year, he wrote: "Mr. Webster must learn that those to whom his name was once dear and honored disown him; that he who was their pride in the woods and mountains of New England is now their mortification. . . . He is a man who lives by his memory; a man of the past, not a man of faith and of hope. All the drops of his blood have eyes that look downward." The finality of this judgment is one with the finality of the verses of "Ichabod," wrung by the same event from the breast of the gentlest of our poets.

As the intolerable arrogance of the slavery interest became more and more pronounced during the 'fifties, and as the darkening war-clouds gathered over the nation, Emerson's voice was heard again

and again in the plea for righteousness. In 1851, he took the stump in behalf of the Free Soil nominee for the governorship of Massachusetts. In 1854, he spoke in New York in protest against the Fugitive Slave Law. In 1855, he lectured in Boston on the engrossing topic of the hour, speaking of "a statute which made justice and mercy subject to fine and imprisonment," and which "uprooted the foundations of rectitude and denied the existence of God." The dastardly assault upon Sumner in 1856 evoked from Emerson a strong outburst of indignation. The John Brown raid of 1859 found him questioning the methods of that devoted fanatic, but sympathizing with his spirit. It is the lecture on "Courage," read in Boston at the very time when Brown was lying in a Virginia prison under sentence of death, which contains the oft-quoted and memorable description of "that new saint; than whom none purer or more brave was ever led by love of man into conflict and death,—a new saint, waiting yet his martyrdom, and who, if he shall suffer, will make the gallows glorious like the cross." And at a John Brown meeting held a few weeks after the execution, Emerson concluded his address with these words: "The sentiment of mercy is the natural recoil which the laws of the universe provide to protect mankind from destruction by savage passions. And our blind statesmen go up and down with committees

of vigilance and safety, hunting for the origin of this new heresy. They will need a very vigilant committee, indeed, to find its birthplace, and a very strong force to root it out. For the arch-abolitionist, older than Brown, and older than the Shenandoah mountains, is Love, whose other name is Justice, which was before Alfred, before Lycurgus, before slavery, and will be after it."

The volume of essays entitled "The Conduct of Life" was published in 1860. It marks, in a sense, the beginning of Emerson's wider fame, for it was the first of his books to command a large immediate sale. The psychological moment in the public consciousness had come for him at last, and he stood clearly recognizable as one of the foremost spirits of his time. It must not be supposed, however, that the sale of this book, or of any book, brought him larger pecuniary returns in the absolute sense. His income from royalties was modest at the best, and did not do much to tide him over the war period of high cost of living and diminishing returns from his customary sources of revenue. The war was to make him distinctly poor, but he welcomed its outbreak as a means of clearing the air. "We have been very homeless, some of us, for some years past,—say since 1850; but now we have a country again. Up to March 4, 1861, in the very place of law we found instead of it, war—now we have

forced the conspiracy out-of-doors. Law is on this side and War on that." Visiting the Charlestown Navy Yard, he looked about him, and said: "Ah! sometimes gunpowder smells good." Long afterward, he expressed his feeling in these words: "At the darkest moment in the history of the republic, when it looked as if the nation would be dismembered, pulverized into its original elements, the attack on Fort Sumter crystallized the North into a unit, and the hope of mankind was saved."

Early in 1862, Emerson was invited to give an anti-slavery address in Washington. He urged emancipation, calling it "the demand of civilization," although he thought, as before, that it might suitably be accompanied by compensation for the property rights it should destroy. When, later in that year, the Proclamation was put forth, he spoke at a meeting in Boston, saying that "this act makes that the lives of our heroes have not been sacrificed in vain," that by it "the government has assured itself of the best constituency in the world." When the Proclamation went into effect the first day of the year following, the "Boston Hymn" was his contribution to the celebration of the occasion. Concord was the scene, and Lexington Day, 1865, the time, of his address upon the character of the martyred President, in which he said of Lincoln: "He is the true history of the American people in his

time. Step by step he walked before them; slow with their slowness, quickening his march by theirs, the true representative of this continent; an entirely public man; the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thought of their minds articulated by his tongue." And a few weeks later he spoke briefly but feelingly at the Harvard commemoration. Of Emerson's appearance at those exercises, Lowell, whose "Ode" made them chiefly glorious, hardly exaggerates when he says: "To him more than to all other causes together did the young martyrs of our civil war owe the sustaining strength of thoughtful heroism that is so touching in every record of their lives." He was indeed the Mazzini of our American *Risorgimento*.

The early 'sixties bereft Emerson of two of his closest friends, Theodore Parker, who died in 1860, and Thoreau, who died in 1862. In 1863, he was appointed to the West Point board of official visitors. That year also he addressed, for the second time, the students of Dartmouth and Waterville. In 1865, his son Edward was graduated from Harvard, and his daughter Ellen married William H. Forbes. In 1868, his brother William died at Concord. In 1866, his *alma mater*, who in the earlier days had held him in much suspicion, took him to her own, made him a Doctor of Laws, and appointed him to her Board of Overseers, upon which he served for

twelve years. And in 1867, he officiated at Harvard as Phi Beta Kappa orator for the second time, just thirty years after "The American Scholar" had proclaimed a new gospel at Cambridge.

Of lecturing there was still no end, and all through the 'sixties we find him speaking in many places and on all sorts of subjects. Besides the occasions already specified, there were lectures in the pulpit made vacant by Parker's death, half a dozen regular courses in Boston, and single addresses given as far afield as Montreal and Chicago. Then there was the course of sixteen Harvard lectures on "The Natural History of the Intellect," given in 1870, and repeated the following year. In this course he came nearer than elsewhere to the formulation of a systematic philosophy, which, after all, is not saying very much. "I write anecdotes of the intellect, a sort of Farmers' Almanac of mental moods," he said of himself, and of the maker of systems, "'Tis the gnat grasping the world." After this task was done, he wrote to Carlyle: "I doubt the experts in philosophy will not praise my discourses;—but the topics give me room for my guesses, criticism, admirations, and experiences with the accepted masters, and also the lessons I have learned from the hidden great." In 1867, he published "May Day," his second volume of poems, and in 1870, "Society and Solitude."

Just after he had finished his second term of lecturing at Harvard, in the spring of 1871, Emerson was invited to accompany John M. Forbes (whose son had married Emerson's daughter) on a six weeks' trip to California. It proved a welcome diversion, for he was tired and a little disheartened. The start was made in April, and the party numbered twelve. The journey was luxuriously made in a private car, and he thoroughly enjoyed it. An occasional lecture was given, and his discourse on "Immortality" one Sunday evening in San Francisco so impressed an ingenuous newspaper reporter as to result in the following remarks, printed next morning. "All left the church feeling that an elegant tribute had been paid to the creative genius of the Great First Cause, and that a masterly use of the English language had contributed to that end." After a month in California, which included a view of the big trees and a visit to the Yosemite, the party started homeward, stopping at Salt Lake City, where a call was made upon that very practical and un-Emersonian philosopher, Brigham Young, who seemed never to have heard of his visitor. Some ingenious writer might find in this interview a theme for an "imaginary conversation" after the manner of Landor. Another stop was made at Niagara, and the first days of summer found the traveler once more at home in Concord.

IX

Of the year (1871–1872) following Emerson's return from the Pacific coast there is little to record. There were a few occasional addresses, the customary western lecture-tour, and, in the spring, another series of platform appearances in Boston. One midsummer morning of 1872, when he had just returned from an engagement at Amherst, he was awakened by the crackling of fire, and discovered that his house was burning at the roof. He called for help, which quickly came, but not quickly enough to save the dwelling from destruction. But the neighbors contrived to get out nearly everything that was movable. It had rained during the night, and the exposure was a considerable shock to Emerson's weakened constitution, although there were no serious immediate consequences. But it probably hastened the mental breakdown of his last years, of which signs were already apparent.

Many offers of shelter were at once made to the homeless family, which was soon reëstablished under the hospitable roof of the Old Manse, while a temporary study was fitted up for Emerson in the Court House. This was clearly the time for his friends to bestir themselves, and more substantial aid quickly followed. As the result of a friendly conspiracy, he was promptly presented with a

check for five thousand dollars, and later subscriptions to the fund added nearly twelve thousand dollars to that amount: these subscriptions came in almost spontaneously when the word was passed about that a fund was being collected. When the presentation was made by Mr. E. R. Hoar, it was accompanied by the following whimsical explanation. "I told him, by way of prelude, that some of his friends had made him treasurer of an association who wished him to go to England and examine Warwick Castle and other noted houses that had been recently injured by fire, in order to get the best ideas possible for restoration, and then to apply them to a house which the association was formed to restore in this neighborhood." Emerson was deeply affected by this tribute of friendship, and accepted it in the spirit which prompted the offering. He particularly asked for a full list of the contributors, saying: "You may be sure that I shall not rest till I have learned them, every one, to repeat to myself at night and at morning."

Emerson also accepted, with some hesitation, the suggestion of a trip abroad, and October found him in New York prepared to set sail. Before leaving, he spoke at the dinner arranged in honor of Froude's visit, and then, on the 28th of the month, accompanied by his daughter Ellen, he left his native shores for the third and last time. His travels

occupied about six months, and took him to England, Paris, Rome, and Egypt. The sea voyage proved a tonic, and soon after landing he addressed an English audience with much of his old readiness and force. He saw Carlyle again, as "strong in person and manners as ever," and Lowell, and Bancroft, and many other old friends. The Nile journey was made in January, 1873, and took him as far as Philæ. He thus summarized his impression of Egypt: "All this journey is a perpetual humiliation, satirizing and whipping our ignorance. The people despise us because we are helpless babies, who cannot speak or understand a word they say; the sphinxes scorn dunces; the obelisks, the temple-walls, defy us with their histories which we cannot spell." Returning to England by way of Naples, Rome, Florence, and Paris, he had good talk (always more interesting to him than any sights) on the way with Grimm, and Lowell, and Renan, and Taine, and Tourguénieff. A round of social engagements kept him busy in England. In London, he was with Gladstone, Browning, and Carlyle, in Oxford with Max Müller, Jowett, and Ruskin, in Edinburgh with many old friends made at the time of his earlier visit. He reached his Concord home in May, when the whole town turned out to greet him, and to escort him in triumph to the house that had been rebuilt during his absence.

Occasion may be taken to introduce at this point, as the story of Emerson's life is rounding to its close, the personal description which every biography should include. The quotations that follow are from the account by Dr. Holmes. "Emerson's personal appearance was that of a scholar, the descendant of scholars. He was tall and slender, with the complexion which is bred in the alcove and not in the open air. He used to tell his son Edward that he measured six feet in his shoes, but his son thinks he could hardly have straightened himself to that height in his later years. He was very light for a man of his stature. . . . His face was thin, his nose somewhat accipitrine, casting a broad shadow; his mouth rather wide, well formed and well closed, carrying a question and an assertion in its finely finished curves; the lower lip a little prominent, the chin shapely and firm, as becomes the corner-stone of the countenance. His expression was calm, sedate, kindly, with that look of refinement, centring about the lips, which is rarely found in the male New Englander, unless the family features have been for two or three cultivated generations the battlefield and the playground of varied thoughts and complex emotions as well as the sensuous and nutritive port of entry. His whole look was irradiated by an ever active inquiring intelligence. His manner was noble and gracious. . . . His hair was brown, quite fine, and, till he was fifty,

very thick. His eyes were of the strongest and brightest blue."

The rest of Emerson's life-story is soon told. In the way of books, there was "Parnassus," (1874,) a collection of his favorite poems, "Letters and Social Aims," (1875,) and a revised edition of the "Poems" (1878). In the way of lectures, there was the centennial address made in 1875 at the unveiling of the statue of the Minute-Man in Concord, the address of 1876 to the students of the University of Virginia, the address of 1879 to the divinity students at Cambridge, and the address of 1881 on Carlyle at the Massachusetts Historical Society. The other addresses made during these closing years were repetitions of lectures that had done duty long before. The meetings of the Concord School of Philosophy, beginning in 1878, numbered Emerson among their attendants, and in 1880 he gave one of his lectures before the school. How he was regarded in England in these latter days is shown by his nomination in 1874, for the honorary post of Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow. His opponent was no less a personage than Disraeli, who won the election by seven hundred votes to Emerson's five hundred. But the fact of his nomination, to say nothing of the large vote he received, was an extraordinary tribute to his character and his fame. He counted that vote as "quite

the fairest laurel" that had ever fallen to his share.

The decay of Emerson's faculties in this Indian summer of his life was chiefly marked by aphasia and increasing forgetfulness. It may be illustrated by what he was heard to say to a friend at Longfellow's funeral. "That gentleman was a sweet, beautiful soul, but I have entirely forgotten his name." His biographer, Elliot Cabot, who was much with him at this time, thus writes: "To me there was nothing sad in his condition; it was obvious enough that he was but the shadow of himself, but the substance was there, only a little removed. The old alertness and incisiveness were gone, but there was no confusion of ideas, and the objects of interest were what they always had been. He was often at a loss for a word, but no consciousness of this or of any other disability seemed to trouble him. Nor was there any appearance of effort to keep up the conversation." His friend and disciple, Moncure Conway, who last saw him in 1880, gives us this account: "The intensity of his silent attention to every word that was said was painful, suggesting a concentration of his powers to break through the invisible walls closing around them. Yet his face was serene; he was even cheerful, and joined in our laughter at some letters his eldest daughter had preserved, from young girls, trying to coax autograph

letters, and in one case asking for what price he would write a valedictory address she had to deliver at college. He was still able to joke about his 'naughty memory,' and no complaint came from him when he once rallied himself on living too long. Emerson appeared to me strangely beautiful at this time, and the sweetness of his voice, when he spoke of the love and providence at his side, is quite indescribable." With this pleasant picture in our memory, we may pass on to the story of his death.

The end came in the spring of 1882, when a cold, settling into pneumonia, laid him prostrate. There was little suffering, and it was less than a week that he was actually confined to his bed. His mind wandered at times, but there was no real delirium, and he knew his friends to the last. He died Thursday, April 27, and was buried the following Sunday in Sleepy Hollow, "at the foot of a tall pine-tree upon the top of the ridge in the highest part of the grounds." The services were conducted by Dr. W. H. Furness, and the speakers were Dr. James Freeman Clarke and Judge E. Rockwood Hoar. In contemplation of the pure and noble life thus ended, one thinks, as of Milton's Samson, that "nothing is here for tears;" or one recalls E. C. Stedman's fine phrase about Landor, who "at death flung off somewhere into the æther still facing the daybreak and worshipped by many rising stars;"

or with his biographer, finds his last thought of Emerson tinged with the rosy flush of Emerson's own verses,

> "Spring still makes spring in the mind
> When sixty years are told;
> Love wakes anew this throbbing heart,
> And we are never old.
> Over the winter glaciers
> I see the summer glow,
> And through the wild-piled snow-drift
> The warm rosebuds below."

And for a less fleeting last memory, because a less emotional one, we may perhaps do no better than cite Lord Morley's summary, to the effect that "Emerson remains among the most persuasive and inspiring of those who by word and example rebuke our despondency, purify our sight, awaken us from the deadening slumbers of convention and conformity, exorcise the pestering imps of vanity, and lift men up from low thoughts and sullen moods of helplessness and impiety."

Henry D. Thoreau.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

I

Among the satellites of Emerson in the Concord system, there was one whose orbit was so eccentric that the computation of its elements has not yet been exactly determined. A few people understood Thoreau during his lifetime, but by the general public he was misjudged, when not absolutely ignored. His short life was spent almost wholly within a few miles of his native town; its influence was almost unfelt outside the narrow circle of his personal acquaintance. He wrote industriously for a quarter of a century, but published only two books during his lifetime, and those with difficulty and with results so discouraging that he gave up all thought of earning either a living or a reputation by his writings. Yet he was hardly laid in his grave when the world began to take note of him. Book after book was unearthed from the mass of his manuscripts, and his vogue grew from year to year. A generation after his death, his "works" made a substantial library of ten or more volumes, and

some twenty years later, a definitive edition in a score of volumes attested the permanence of his fame. Even this edition took no account of a considerable quantity of manuscript material, some of which has found other forms of publication, and some of which has not yet been printed. When we look back toward his life from our present twentieth century point of vantage, it is easily seen that he was the principal figure among those who lived in the circle of Emerson's radiance and felt directly the inspiration of his example.

Among the influences that have thus done tardy but adequate justice to one of the most original and thoughtful of American writers we must take account of his discovery by the friendly students of our literature in the mother-country. In the 'seventies and 'eighties, a number of English critics found their way to Thoreau, and were both delighted and stimulated by the fresh quality of his thought and style. These critics were by no means simply laudatory; Stevenson called him a skulker and a prig, and Morley a "whimsical egotist," but they both, and many others with them, thought him well worth reading, and by their efforts his public became widely extended. Of recent years, he has even been taken up by continental critics, and has almost won a place beside Cooper and Poe and Whitman in the small group of American writers who have come to

command a cosmopolitan audience. This foreign recognition of American literature has always been somewhat haphazard and undiscriminating, and its confused sense of values has made the judicious among us grieve, but it has also had a sort of reflex effect upon us in opening our own eyes to qualities that we might otherwise have failed to appreciate.

About the year 1773, the year of the Boston Tea Party, a Jersey man named John Thoreau, the younger son of a merchant family of substance, emigrated to New England, and opened a store on the Long Wharf in Boston. In 1781, the year of Yorktown, he married a Scotch-woman named Jane Burns. After her death some fifteen years later, he removed to Concord, and died soon thereafter leaving a son and three daughters. The son, named for his father, carried on the family business of storekeeping at Concord, but not with his father's success. Afterward he turned his attention to pencil-making, and became moderately prosperous. Married in 1812 to Cynthia Dunbar, he had four children, two of each sex, brought them up to live by principle and to love books, rounded out an unobtrusive life, and died in 1859. His widow lived to the venerable age of eighty-five, and died in 1872. All four of the children became teachers; the two oldest, John and Helen, died at a comparatively early age; Henry, the subject of the present

biography, lived to his forty-fifth year, and Sophia, the youngest of the four, survived him by fourteen years. None of the four was married, but the family in America continued to be represented by Maria, Henry's aunt, the youngest child of the orginal John Thoreau, who lived until 1881. With her the last person in this country to bear the name of Thoreau passed away.

A brief characterization of Henry's parents is a necessary feature of any account of the environment which shaped his life. John Thoreau is thus described by Henry in a letter written to announce his father's death: "I think I may say that he was wholly unpretending; and there was this peculiarity in his aim; that though he had pecuniary difficulties to contend with the greater part of his life, he always studied hard to make a *good* article, pencil or other, (for he practiced various arts), and was never satisfied with what he produced. Nor was he ever disposed in the least to put off a poor one for the sake of pecuniary gain,—as if he labored for a higher end." Mrs. Marble speaks of him as exemplifying "The reticent composure of the Quaker and the sturdy, industrious qualities of his Scotch inheritance, mingled with deft and inventive skill," and calls him "punctilious in every detail of life, reserved before strangers yet an interesting companion to friends, and deeply respected by his townsmen." Mr.

Sanborn describes him as "a grave and silent, but inwardly cheerful and social person, who found no difficulty in giving his wife the lead in all affairs." In this he was probably wise, for his wife, Henry's mother, was a woman who would have taken the lead in any case. She was a kindly woman with a sharp tongue, and usually monopolized the conversation. "One of the most unceasing talkers ever seen in Concord," says Mr. Sanborn, which is saying much, when we remember the amount and variety of talk that went on in Concord. Old Dr. Ripley once wrote in a letter: "I meant to have filled a page with sentiments. But a *kind neighbor*, Mrs. Thoreau, has been here more than an hour. This letter must go in the mail to-day." She was a partisan in many local quarrels—Trinitarian, antimasonic, and antislavery —and was not without a touch of what seemed frivolity to some of her associates. Calling one day on Miss Mary Emerson (being seventy years old and her hostess eighty-seven), she wore long and brilliant bonnet-ribbons. As her guest rose to depart, Miss Emerson said: "Perhaps you noticed, Mrs. Thoreau, that I closed my eyes during your call. I did so because I did not wish to look on the ribbons you are wearing, so unsuitable for a child of God and a person of your years."

Such were the parents of the child of genius who was born in Concord July 12, 1817, and who says

in his journal: "I was baptized in the old meeting-house by Dr. Ripley when I was three months, and did not cry." David and Henry were the names given him at baptism and it was not until his later college days that he reversed their order, since "Henry" was the one by which he was always called. Ellery Channing thus describes the house in which Thoreau was born: "It was a perfect piece of our old New England style of building, with its gray, unpainted boards, its grassy, unfenced door-yard. The house is somewhat isolate and remote from thoroughfares; on the Virginia road, an old-fashioned, winding, at length deserted pathway, the more smiling for its forked orchards, tumbling walls, and mossy banks. About it are pleasant sunny meadows, deep with their beds of peat, so cheering with its homely, hearth-like fragrance; and in front runs a constant stream." The name, "Virginia road," is accounted for by the tradition that a freed Virginia negro found his way to the outskirts of Concord and built a cabin there. It was a fitting birthplace for a man whose house was frequently a place of refuge for fugitive negroes, and whose chief public activity was put forth in connection with the anti-slavery agitation. The Concord into which Thoreau was born was a town of about two thousand inhabitants. It is worthy of note that, although his family had but recently settled in Concord, he was almost

the only one of the famous group of Concord authors who could claim the town as a birthplace. And from the time when he was graduated at Cambridge, and returned to Concord to live, the sum of all his journeyings to other regions amounted to only about a year. In Alcott's words, "Thoreau thought he lived in the centre of the universe, and would annex the rest of the planet to Concord."

The Thoreau family moved about a good deal during Henry's childhood. Before he was two years old, they were settled in Chelmsford, where "we lived near the meeting-house, where they kept the powder in the garret." Boston was the family home from 1821 to 1823, and there the boy first went to school. From his sixth year to his sixteenth (1823–1833), when he entered Harvard, his family remained in Concord, frequently moving from one house to another. Here the boy got his preliminary education, first in the village schools, and then in the Concord Academy. It was this institution that fitted him (or "made unfit," to use his own words) for college. His boyhood was happily occupied with work and play. He did the family chores, drove the family cow to pasture, and roamed about the woods and meadows. Bits of anecdote relating to his childhood have been preserved, as is usually the case with precocious children. Once when about four, his lesson in the New England Primer

taught him that he must die, but he was dubious about the joys of the heavenly life. He had been coasting, but his sled was a cheap one, and he was afraid he could not take it to so fine a place as heaven. "The boys say it is not shod with iron, and not worth a cent." He was a stoical little chap, nicknamed "judge" for his seriousness, and he had an ingrained sense of justice. But he seems, on the whole, to have been a fairly genuine boy, sensitive, fun-loving, and affectionate.

The educational tradition was strong in the Thoreau family, and Henry must go to college, although it was a serious matter to provide for his expenses, even in those days of the simple educational life. Having been duly grounded in his classics at the Academy, he was entered at Harvard in 1833, when sixteen years old. His room was in Hollis, where he had "many and noisy neighbors, and a residence in the fourth story." Various members of the family contributed to his modest college expenses, and he was a beneficiary, to a small extent, of the college funds set apart for the aid of deserving students. He also helped to support himself by occasional terms of teaching. One winter, he taught the school at Canton, where he lived at the home of Orestes Brownson, then a Protestant minister in that town. The influence of that restless thinker doubtless counted for something in Thoreau's

development, although he was as far as possible from following Brownson to the haven in which his philosophic doubts ultimately found rest. At Harvard, he was inspired by the instruction of Channing, to whom many other young men of that generation paid tribute, but the college teaching as a whole did not excite him to much enthusiasm, and he got his education by absorption, rather than by any direct process of inculcation. The library rather than the class-room was his delight, and he read widely and deeply in classical English literature.

One of his classmates, John Weiss, has left us a vivid description of Thoreau as a collegian. "He was cold and unimpressible. The touch of his hand was moist and indifferent, as if he had taken up something when he saw your hand coming, and caught your grasp upon it. How the prominent grey-blue eyes seemed to rove down the path, just in advance of his feet, as his grave Indian stride carried him down to University Hall. He did not care for people; his class-mates seemed very remote. This reverie hung always about him, and not so loosely as the odd garments which the pious household care furnished. Thought had not yet awakened his countenance; it was serene, but rather dull, rather plodding. The lips were not yet firm; there was almost a look of smug satisfaction lurking round their corners. It is plain now that he was

preparing to hold his future views with great seriousness and personal appreciation of their importance. The nose was prominent, but its curve fell forward without firmness over the upper lip, and we remember him as looking very much like some Egyptian sculptures of faces, large-featured, but brooding, immobile, fixed in a mystic egoism. Yet his eyes were sometimes searching as if he had dropped, or expected to find, something. In fact, his eyes seldom left the ground, even in his most earnest conversations with you." We may supplement this objective impression, with Thoreau's own statement made in a letter to the secretary of his class. "Though bodily I have been a member of Harvard University, heart and soul I have been far away among the scenes of my boyhood. Those hours that should have been devoted to study have been spent in scouring the woods and exploring the lakes and streams of my native village. Immured within the dark but classic walls of a Stoughton or a Hollis, my spirit yearned for the sympathy of my old and almost forgotten friend, Nature."

The introspective bent of the boy's disposition, thus early marked, his need for solitude and for undisturbed communion with nature and his own thoughts, became more pronounced as the years went on. In a whimsical passage in "Walden," he tells us how the social side of life in Concord im-

pressed him, and in how restive a mood he dwelt among his fellows. "I observed that the vitals of the village were the grocery, the bar-room, the post-office, and the bank; and, as a necessary part of the machinery, they kept a bell, a big gun, and a fire engine at convenient places, and the houses were so arranged as to make the most of mankind, in lanes and fronting one another, so that every traveler had to run the gauntlet, and every man, woman, and child might get a lick at him. . . . Signs were hung out on all sides to allure him; some to catch him by the appetite as the tavern or victualing cellar; some by the fancy, as the dry-goods store or the jeweler's; and others by the hair, the feet, or the skirts, as the barber, the shoemaker, or the tailor. Besides there was a still more terrible standing invitation to call at every one of these houses, and company expected about these times. For the most part I escaped wonderfully from these dangers, either by proceeding at once boldly and without deliberation to the goal, as is recommended to those who run the gauntlet, or by keeping my thoughts on high things like Orpheus, who, 'loudly singing the praises of the god to his lyre, drowned the voices of the Sirens, and kept out of danger.' Sometimes, I bolted suddenly, and nobody could tell my whereabouts, for I did not stand much about gracefulness, and never hesitated at a gap in a fence. I was even accustomed to

make an irruption into some houses, where I was well entertained, and after leaving the kernels and the very last sieveful of news, what had subsided, the prospects of war and peace, and whether the world was likely to hold together much longer, I was let out through the rear avenues, and so escaped to the woods again." All this does not mean that Thoreau was a shy and faun-like creature; still less that he was a victim of misanthropy; it means only that often he found himself his own best companion, and was determined to resist those social importunities which, if a man submit to them, leave him no time for the development of the inner life and for quiet intellectual growth.

Recurring to his college days, it seems that Thoreau, although anything but imbued with the college spirit, kept a fair rank in his class, and carried off some small spoil of commencement honors. His "part" was a share in what was called a "conference" on "The Commercial Spirit," and it is not difficult to detect the Emersonian influence, although with a difference, in what he said. "We are to look chiefly for the origin of the commercial spirit, and the power that still cherishes and maintains it, in a blind and unmanly love of wealth. Wherever this exists, it is too sure to become the ruling spirit; and, as a natural consequence, it infuses into all our thoughts and affections a degree of its own selfish-

ness; we become selfish in our patriotism, selfish in our domestic relations, selfish in our religion. Let men, true to their natures, cultivate the moral affections, lead manly and independent lives; let them make riches the means and not the end of existence, and we shall hear no more of the commercial spirit. The sea will not stagnate, the earth will be as green as ever, and the air as pure. This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used." He left Harvard with President Quincy's certificate stating that "his rank was high as a scholar in all the branches, and his morals and general conduct unexceptionable and exemplary."

II

Furnished with this testimonial, and with letters of similar tenor from Dr. Ripley and Emerson, Thoreau began to look about for an opening in the teaching profession—the only profession that seemed available to him. Two schools as far apart as Virginia and Maine, were suggested to him, but he failed in securing an appointment to either, and fell back upon the schools of Concord, where he taught for brief periods in 1837 and 1838. The question of corporal punishment was the rock upon

which these efforts split. He substituted moral suasion for that time-honored instrument of discipline, the ferule, and the School Committee was naturally indignant at the innovation. He was remonstrated with, and complied, one day, to the extent of "feruling six of his pupils after school, one of whom was the maid-servant in his own house." But his conscience troubled him, and he soon informed the Committee "that he should no longer keep their school, as they interfered with his arrangements." His next resource was a private school, opened in his own house in the summer of 1838, and his brother John was taken into partnership. Afterwards, the classes were enlarged, transferred to rooms in the Concord Academy, and continued until early in 1841, when school-teaching was finally abandoned, and Thoreau became a member of Emerson's household. The teaching profession suffered a sad loss when he gave it up, for he loved children, understood their ways of thinking, and knew how to cultivate their imagination. Many a child was entranced by his retelling of classical myths and Indian legends; many a child whom he took upon country rambles gained from his tutelage an insight into the meaning of nature, its hidden ways and purposes.

Thoreau's period of teaching was also the period of the one romantic passion of his life. Among the

oldest friends of the family was Mrs. Joseph Ward, the widow of a Revolutionary officer. She came to Concord with her daughter in 1833, and spent much of her time there for several years, the guest of Thoreau's aunts and mother. There were also grandchildren, a boy and a girl, who came to visit them. The boy of eleven went to John and Henry's school, and the sister of seventeen, whose name was Ellen Sewall, found her way into the hearts of both the brothers. Henry seems to have been unwilling to stand in the way of John's happiness; as one of his biographers says: "Henry's undoubted love for this young girl was noble in its purity and renunciation, and it has tinted with its ideal light all his later heart-life, and given rare spirituality to his words upon love and marriage." The girl's feeling for either brother was probably no more than one of pleasant friendship, for soon after John Thoreau's death she married a clergyman, and lived happily to a ripe old age. Emerson thought there was a reference to this boyish love in the verses entitled "Sympathy," contributed by Thoreau in 1840 to "The Dial." The allusion is veiled, and is to be sought, if anywhere, in the following stanza:

> "Eternity may not the chance repeat;
> But I must tread my single way alone,
> In sad remembrance that we once did meet,
> And know that bliss irrevocably gone."

These were among the first of the many snatches of verse that came from Thoreau's pen. He was an even more desultory poet than Emerson, and had little of the elder poet's magic of phrasing and imagery. In 1838, he wrote his first lecture for the Concord Lyceum, his subject being "Society." There was hardly a year of his subsequent life when he did not again stand upon the Lyceum platform of his native town. It was in the year before, a few weeks after his leaving college, that he began "the big red Journal," recording therein from day to day his experience, both inward and outward. By the summer of 1840 this journal, into which he poured the contents of his mind, both trivial and significant, had filled some six hundred large pages, and by the beginning of the following year, another four hundred pages had been added: new volumes followed in regular succession, for the practice was continued throughout his life. This progressive self-revelation puts us upon very intimate terms with the writer; few men of letters have ever exposed their mental processes so minutely. Even in his college days, Thoreau had commended the practice of "keeping a private journal or record of our thoughts, feelings, studies, and daily experience." He was only seventeen when he wrote the following words in a college "theme." "If each one would employ a certain portion of each day in looking back upon the time

which has passed, and in writing down his thoughts and feelings, in reckoning up his daily gains, that he may be able to detect whatever false coins may have crept into his coffers, and, as it were, in settling accounts with his mind,—not only would his daily experience be increased, since his feelings and ideas would thus be more clearly defined,—but he would be ready to turn over a new leaf (having carefully perused the preceding one) and would not continue to glance carelessly over the same page, without being able to distinguish it from a new one."

Quite a number of Thoreau's college exercises have been preserved, and they indicate clearly his future vocation. The intellectual poise and vigorous independence which were to characterize his later writings are distinctly foreshadowed in these early flights. Here, for example, we have the prose-poet of nature in embryo: "Now is my attention engaged by a truant hawk, as, like a messenger from those ethereal regions, he issues from the bosom of a cloud, and, at first a mere speck in the distance, comes circling inward, exploring every seeming creek, and rounding every jutting precipice. And now, his mission ended, what can be more majestic than his stately flight, as he wheels around some towering pine, enveloped in a cloud of smaller birds that have united to expel him from their premises." Here is the note of protest, so frequently

sounded in after years, against the subservient attitude toward literary tradition. "The aspirant to fame must breathe the atmosphere of foreign parts, and learn to talk about things which the homebred student never dreamed of, if he would have his talents appreciated or his opinion regarded by his countrymen. Ours are authors of the day, they bid fair to outlive their works; they are too fashionable to write for posterity. True, there are some among us, who can contemplate the babbling brook, without, in imagination, polluting its waters with a mill-wheel; but even they are prone to sing of skylarks and nightingales perched on hedges, to the neglect of the homely robin-redbreast and the straggling rail-fences of their own native land."

In the summer of 1839, Henry and John Thoreau engaged in an outing which was destined to have important literary consequences. It took the form of a bold voyage of exploration, in a boat of their own building, down the Concord River to its confluence with the Merrimack and thence up the latter stream to Concord, New Hampshire. This venture was responsible for Thoreau's first book, which was not, however, to see the light of publication for ten years. The beginning of the expedition is thus described: "At length, on Saturday, the last day of August, 1839, we two, brothers, and natives of Concord, weighed anchor in this river port; for Concord,

too, lies under the sun, a port of entry and departure for the bodies as well as the souls of men; one shore at least exempted from all duties but such as an honest man will gladly discharge. A warm drizzling rain had obscured the morning, and threatened to delay our voyage, but at length the leaves and grass were dried, and it came out a mild afternoon, as serene and fresh as if Nature were maturing some greater scheme of her own. After this long dripping and oozing from every pore, she began to respire again more healthily than ever. So with a vigorous shove we launched our boat from the bank, while the flags and bulrushes courtesied a God-speed, and dropped silently down the stream. Our boat, which had cost us a week's labor in the spring, was in form like a fisherman's dory, fifteen feet long by three and a half in breadth at the widest part, painted green below, with a border of blue, with reference to the two elements in which it was to spend its existence. It had been loaded the evening before at our door, half a mile from the river, with potatoes and melons from a patch which we had cultivated, and a few utensils, and was provided with wheels in order to be rolled around falls, as well as with two sets of oars, and several slender poles for shoving in shallow places, and also two masts, one of which served for a tent pole at night; for a buffalo-skin was to be our bed, and a tent of cotton cloth our

roof. . . . Some village friends stood upon a promontory lower down the stream to wave us a last farewell; but we, having already performed these shore rites, with excusable reserve, as befits those who are embarked on unusual enterprises, who behold but speak not, silently glided past the firm lands of Concord, both peopled cape and lonely summer meadow, with steady sweeps." Thus begins the actual story of the voyage which is known to all lovers of literature from "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," the first of Thoreau's books.

This expedition was perhaps the most noteworthy incident of Thoreau's life during his school-teaching period. He held his brother John in the deepest affection, and few brothers have lived upon terms of such intimacy. Probably the severest personal grief that Henry ever knew was occasioned by John's untimely death in 1842, a victim of tetanus. The missing place was filled, in a way, by Ellery Channing, a young man of Thoreau's own age, who had come the year before to live in Concord, bringing with him his bride, the sister of Margaret Fuller. Thoreau became warmly attached to Channing, who became the closest of his friends, remained his life-long neighbor, and, after his death, became the first of his biographers. Thoreau acquired many other friendships during these years of early manhood. This was precisely the time when tran-

scendentalism became focussed in Concord, and Thoreau was welcomed by all the members of the circle. It is recorded that he was present one evening as early as May, 1840, when the circle met to discuss "The inspiration of the Prophet and Bard, the nature of Poetry, and the causes of the sterility of Poetic Inspiration in our age and country." Although on the best of terms with the transcendentalists, and a continuous contributor to "The Dial," Thoreau might hardly be described as one of them. While he by no means held himself aloof from them, as Hawthorne did, he was the last man in the world to become the disciple of a school, and he abated no jot of his intellectual independence on account of his association with Alcott and Emerson. He was affected, as the others were, by the *Zeitgeist*, and the studies that helped to shape their thought (particularly the readings in Oriental wisdom) helped also to shape his; but he was too much of a realist, and had too clear a sense of the adjustment of means to ends, to be lifted to their perilous and cloudy heights of speculation, and his close contact with nature saved him from the vagaries of a philosophy which was spun in large measure from the inner consciousness. It was Louisa Alcott, who knew from domestic experience what she was telling about, who defined a philosopher as "a man up in a balloon, with his family and friends holding the ropes

which confine him to earth and trying to haul him down." Thoreau, who at least kept his feet fairly planted upon mother earth, was at all events not that kind of a philosopher.

III

Thoreau's acquaintance with Emerson began in 1837. Emerson himself had not settled in Concord until 1834, and his attention was first called to the young man by a common friend of the two families, who noted certain similarities of thought between one of Emerson's recent lectures and a passage in Thoreau's diary, and spoke of it one day when visiting the Emerson family. As a result, the young man was invited to the house, an occurrence which marked the beginning of a friendship which meant a great deal to Thoreau, and which was to end only with his death, a quarter of a century later. "I delight much in my young friend, who seems to have as free and erect a mind as any I have ever met," wrote Emerson when the acquaintance was only a year old. In the spring of 1841, when school-teaching was finally given up, Thoreau was invited to become an inmate of the Emerson household, and remained a member of the family for the next two years. This was a mutually helpful relation on the material no less than on the intellectual side. He was to have his board and lodging for what work

he chose to do, and it is evident from the testimony that he gave a full equivalent for what he received. "He is a great benefactor and physician to me," wrote his host, "for he is an indefatigable and skilful laborer." Emerson's son writes of his services as follows: "He was as little troublesome a member of the household, with his habits of plain living and high thinking, as could well have been, and in the constant absences of the master of the house on his lecturing trips, the presence there of such a friendly and sturdy inmate was a great comfort. He was handy with tools, and there was no limit to his usefulness and ingenuity about the house and garden." He looked after the business affairs of the family, kept the garden in condition, planted trees, and in general filled the place of an older son or a younger brother. He also proved helpful in managing the affairs of "The Dial," in both an editorial and a business capacity. The asperity of his character was recognized as inherent, but does not seem to have been a cause of irritation. "Thoreau is, with difficulty, sweet," was Emerson's way of describing it. "I grow savager and savager every day, as if fed on raw meat," Thoreau wrote in a letter of 1841, but this was only his way of expressing the yearning for a life closer to nature's heart—the ideal which was afterwards realized in the cabin by Walden pond. He could write of himself in such terms as these: "I

am as unfit for any practical purpose—I mean for the furtherance of the world's ends—as gossamer for ship-timber; and I, who am going to be a pencil-maker tomorrow, can sympathize with God Apollo, who served King Admetus for a while on earth."—Yet he could spend the day contentedly weeding the garden, and the evening romping with the children and popping corn.

It was soon after his entrance into the Emerson home that Thoreau lost his brother John, and with this death that of Emerson's child Waldo was almost coincident. The most fitting commentary upon this double bereavement may be supplied by these passages from Thoreau's letter to Mrs. Brown, the sister of Mrs. Emerson. "Soon after John's death I listened to a music-box, and if, at any time, that event had seemed inconsistent with the beauty and harmony of the universe, it was then gently constrained into the placid course of nature by those shady notes, in mild and unoffended tone echoing far and wide under the heavens. But I find these things more strange than sad to me. What right have I to grieve, who have not ceased to wonder? . . . Only Nature has a right to grieve perpetually, for she only is innocent. Soon the ice will melt, and the blackbirds sing along the river which he frequented, as pleasantly as ever. The same everlasting serenity will appear in the face of God, and we will not be sorrowful if he is not. . . .

As for Waldo, he died as the mist rises from the brook, which the sun will soon dart his rays through. Do not the flowers die every autumn? He had not even taken root here. I was not startled to hear that he was dead; it seemed the most natural event that could happen. His fine organization demanded it, and nature gently yielded its request. It would have been strange if he had lived. Neither will nature manifest any sorrow at his death, but soon the note of the lark will be heard down in the meadow, and fresh dandelions will spring from the old stocks where he plucked them last summer." Sorrow becomes beautiful when thus envisaged. The tenderness of such a resignation suggests a later poet, who has many times voiced this emotion in words of undying beauty.

> "Green earth forgets.
> The gay young generations mask her grief;
> Where bled her children hangs the loaded sheaf."

It was through "The Dial" that Thoreau made his first appearance in print. The poem called "Sympathy," already quoted from, and a paper on the Satires of Persius, were the earliest of his long series of contributions to the pages of that periodical during the four years (1840–1844) of its existence. Most of these contributions were transcribed from the journal, in which they had already found lodgment, and most of them were afterwards reprinted in

the "Week" and the later posthumous volumes. For the first two years of "The Dial," Thoreau's compositions were not of frequent occurrence. These were the years of Margaret Fuller's editorship, and she did not always take kindly to his offerings. A poem submitted in 1841 elicited from her the following criticism of both the man and the writer. "He is healthful, rare, of open eye, ready hand, and noble scope. He sets no limit to his life, nor to the invasions of nature; he is not wilfully pragmatical, cautious, ascetic, or fantastical. But he is as yet a somewhat bare hill, which the warm gales of Spring have not visited. Thought lies too detached, truth is seen too much in detail; we can number and mark the substances imbedded in the rock. Thus his verses are startling as much as stern; the thought does not excuse its conscious existence by letting us see its relation with life; there is a want of fluent music." A prose paper submitted a few weeks later was also rejected with the following critical remarks: "The essay is rich in thoughts, and I should be *pained* not to meet it again. But then, the thoughts seem to me so out of their natural order, that I cannot read it through without *pain*. I never once feel myself in a stream of thought, but seem to hear the grating of tools in the mosaic." These strictures, on the whole, seem to have been just; Thoreau was still a tyro at twenty-four, and far from his later command of the magic

of style. "He says too constantly of nature 'she is mine,'" wrote Margaret, and added: "She is not yours till you have been more hers."

After two years, Miss Fuller gave up "The Dial," leaving it in Emerson's hands, and he in turn, being busied with lecture engagements and other affairs, leaned heavily on Thoreau's assistance, so that the latter became at times practically the editor. His bibliography exhibits five contributions to the first two volumes, and no less than twenty-six to the other two. This must not, however, be explained as a liberal exercise of the editorial prerogative on Thoreau's part, because it was Emerson who insisted on these frequent appearances, being determined that the public (as far as "The Dial" had a public) should become acquainted with the remarkable qualities of this young writer. A number of these contributions were not of Thoreau's own writing, but were selections made by him from the "ethnical scriptures" of the ancient orient, to which it was the particular business of this organ of transcendentalism to direct attention.

Miss Fuller's intellectual characterization of Thoreau, above quoted, may be supplemented by what Hawthorne wrote about him at the same period. "He is a singular character—a young man with much of wild original nature still remaining in him; and so far as he is sophisticated, it is in a way and

method of his own. He is as ugly as sin, long-nosed, queer-mouthed, and with uncouth and somewhat rustic though courteous manners corresponding very well with such an exterior. But his ugliness is of an honest and agreeable fashion, and becomes him much better than beauty." We may take the present opportunity as well as another to introduce further descriptions of the physical Thoreau as he appeared to those who know him most intimately. Channing thus writes: "In height he was about the average; in his build spare, with limbs that were rather longer than usual, or of which he made a larger use. His features were marked; the nose aquiline or very Roman, like one of the portraits of Cæsar (more like a beak, as was said); large overhanging brows above the deepest-set blue eyes that could be seen—blue in certain lights and in others gray; the forehead not unusually broad or high, full of concentrated energy and purpose; the mouth with prominent lips, pursed up with meaning and thought when silent, and giving out when open a stream of the most varied and unusual and instructive sayings. His whole figure had an active earnestness, as if he had no moment to waste; the clenched hand betokened purpose."

The following descriptions date from about a dozen years later. Daniel Ricketson, a New Bedford friend, writes thus: "The most expressive feature of his face was his eye, blue in color, and full of the

greatest humanity and intelligence. His head was of medium size, the same as that of Emerson, and he wore a number seven hat. His arms were rather long, his legs, short, and his hands and feet rather large. His sloping shoulders were a mark of observation." Mr. F. B. Sanborn's description of about the same date runs as follows: "He is a little under size, with a huge Emersonian nose, bluish gray eyes, brown hair, and a ruddy weather-beaten face, which reminds me of some shrewd and honest animal's—some retired philosophical woodchuck or magnanimous fox. . . . He walks about with a brisk, rustic air, and never seems tired." These descriptions taken together, despite their discrepancy on the subject of Thoreau's legs, give a fairly vivid description of the man, and make it evident that a profile portrait is required to do justice to the rugged strength of his features—especially of that nose which all unite in magnifying.

In the summer of 1842, Thoreau and a friend made a three days' foray into the heart of nature by an excursion to Wachusett, climbing the mountain, and camping on its top over night. He describes it as "the observatory of the State," from whose summit we may see "Massachusetts spread out before us in length and breadth like a map." An outing like this would be an insignificant incident in an ordinary life, but in Thoreau's case it bore literary fruit in

the shape of "A Walk to Wachusett," one of the most interesting of the papers of his formative period. Probably a brief essay is all that a three days' excursion is worth, but we remember that the week on the Concord and Merrimack produced a whole volume; not, however, without the intrusion of much matter alien to the special subject—unless we frankly admit that subject to have been Thoreau's mind, and not the geography of a New England river and its tributary.

In the spring of 1843, Thoreau left the Emerson household for New York, whither William Emerson had invited him to come as a tutor for his boy in his Staten Island home. A short time before leaving Concord, he took advantage of his host's absence on a lecture-trip to write him in grateful acknowledgment of his hospitality. "I have been your pensioner for nearly two years, and still left free as under the sky. It has been as free a gift as the sun or the summer, though I have sometimes molested you with my mean acceptance of it,—I who have failed to render even those slight services of the *hand* which would have been for a sign at least: and, by the fault of my nature, have failed of many better and higher services. But I will not trouble you with this, but for once thank you as well as Heaven." This view of the relation is altogether too self-deprecatory, as has before been urged; it could not be taken as a

fair statement of Thoreau's position in the Emerson home without many qualifications. He could hardly be described as a pensioner of whom Channing's words were true: "He was one of those characters who may be called household treasures; always on the spot with skillful eye and hand, to raise the best melons, plant the choicest trees, and act as extempore mechanic; fond of the pets,—his sister's flowers or sacred tabby—kittens being his favorites,—he would play with them by the half hour."

The Staten Island sojourn lasted until the autumn of 1843. Thoreau's tutorial duties were not irksome, and he had much time for exploration and for the cultivation of new acquaintances. One of his aims was the establishment of some relation with editors or publishers that should provide him with remunerative literary work. Thus far his writing had gone unrewarded, save by such fame as "The Dial" could bestow. He had come no nearer to actual pay for his work than a promise made him by the "Boston Miscellany" for his Wachusett paper. The hope of this payment was fondly cherished for a year or so, but all that it ever came to was the offer of a certain number of free copies of the periodical. His New York experiment brought no returns. He wrote in August: "I have tried sundry methods of earning money in the city, of late, but without success: have rambled into every bookseller's or publisher's house,

and discussed their affairs with them. Some propose to me to do what an honest man cannot. Among others I conversed with the Harpers—to see if they might not find me useful to them; but they say that they are making fifty thousand dollars annually, and their motto is to let well alone." A month later he wrote: "As for Eldorado, that is far off yet. My bait will not tempt the rats—they are too well fed. The 'Democratic Review' is poor, and can only afford half or quarter pay, which it *will* do; and they say there is a 'Lady's Companion' that pays,—but I could not write anything companionable." The "Democratic Review" actually accepted two of his offerings, and, we presume, gave him "half or quarter pay" for them.

In other ways, he found his brief stay in New York and vicinity both profitable and interesting. He did not explore the city as much as he would have liked to, because even omnibus-fare was a serious consideration, and there are limits to what a man can do with his legs alone. But he read diligently at the libraries, and made the acquaintance of a number of interesting people. Among them were Horace Greeley, then only on the threshold of his editorial fame; Henry James, "a refreshing, forward-looking, and forward-moving man," who made "humanity seem more erect and respectable;" Albert Brisbane, who looked "like a man who has lived in a cellar, far gone

in consumption;" and W. H. Channing, nephew of the great theologian, "a concave man," whom you may see to be "retreating from himself and from yourself, with sad doubts." Thus Thoreau came in contact with likable individuals, but of mankind in the aggregate, as he saw it in his new field of observation, he had a poor opinion. "Seeing so many people from day to day, one comes to have less respect for flesh and bones, and thinks they must be more loosely-jointed, of less firm fibre, than the few he had known. It must have a very bad influence on children to see so many human beings at once,—mere herds of men."

This was Thoreau's first real acquaintance with the world of men, for Boston was by comparison with New York a rather sleepy community. In one of his letters to Emerson, he expresses his feelings with considerable energy, presumably also relieving them at the same time. "I don't like the city better, the more I see it, but worse. It is a thousand times meaner then I could have imagined. It will be something to hate,—that's the advantage it will be to me; and even the best people in it are a part of it, and talk coolly about it. The pigs in the street are the most respectable part of the population. When will the world learn that a million men are of no importance compared with *one* man?" Emerson must have thought, when he read this petulant outburst,

that his young friend was by way of developing into another Carlyle. The young man probably spent more time rambling around Staten Island than pacing the streets of the city, thus finding a satisfaction that the sight of men could not afford him. The bounty of nature made up for the meanness of humankind. "I have just come from the beach," he wrote one day to his mentor, "and I like it much. Everything there is on a grand and generous scale,—sea-weed, water, and sand; and even the dead fishes, horses, and hogs have a rank, luxuriant odor; great shad-nets spread to dry; crabs and horse-shoes crawling over the sand; clumsy boats, only for service, dancing like sea-fowl over the surf, and ships afar off going about their business." With such simple distractions as these, and with certain shapings of Æschylus and Pindar into English, he filled his leisure hours, and returned to Concord in the autumn not altogether discontented with his summer's outing.

He now took up his father's business of pencil making, and for a time supported himself in that way. He became an expert in the manufacture, and in one (later) year speaks of having made a thousand dollars' worth of pencils. No such amount as this, however, was needed to supply his simple wants. He recognized as an imperative requirement that every individual should earn a living by his own

efforts, and that it was important for a man to know "what proportion of his daily bread he earns by day labor or job work with his pen, what he inherits, what steals." But he was not of those who are in danger *propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*, and his minimum of necessity was fixed at a very low amount. He says in "Walden": "For more than five years I maintained myself solely by the labor of my hands, and I found that, by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of living; the whole of my winters, as well as most of my summers, I had free and clear for study. I found that the occupation of day-laborer was the most independent of any, especially as it required only thirty or forty days in the year to support me." Some idea of the variety of things he could do, and did, upon occasion, may be gained from a letter written to the secretary of his Harvard class in 1847, ten years after its graduation. "Am not married. I don't know whether mine is a profession, or a trade, or what not. It is not yet learned, and in every instance has been practiced before being studied. The mercantile part of it was begun by myself alone. It is not one but legion. I will give you some of the monster's heads. I am a Schoolmaster, a private Tutor, a Surveyor, a Gardener, a Farmer, a Painter (I mean a House Painter), a Carpenter, a Mason, a Day-laborer, a Pencil-maker, a Glass-paper-maker, a Writer, and

sometimes a Poetaster. If you will act the part of Iolus, and apply a hot iron to any of these heads, I shall be greatly obliged to you. My present employment is to answer such orders as may be expected from so general an advertisement as the above. That is, if I see fit, which is not always the case, for I have found out a way to live without what is commonly called employment or industry, attractive or otherwise. Indeed, my steadiest employment, if such it can be called, is to keep myself at the top of my condition, and ready for whatever may turn up in heaven or on earth. The last two or three years I lived in Concord woods, alone, something more than a mile from any neighbor, in a house built entirely by myself.

"P. S. I beg that the class will not consider me an object of charity, and if any of them are in want of any pecuniary assistance and will make known their case to me, I will engage to give them some advice of more worth than money."

IV

When in this letter Thoreau speaks of having found a way to live without industry, he is, of course, alluding to his Walden cabin, and the letter itself dates from the close of his two years' experience as an amateur hermit. "How much sincere life before

we can even utter one sincere word," he had written just before going to Staten Island. The sort of sincere life that Thoreau's nature needed was not to be found in constant intercourse with men; it must be sought in the solitude of nature, with little other companionship than that of his own thoughts. The idea that life might profitably be much simplified, and brought into closer consonance with natural law, was common to all the members of the transcendentalist group, although the favorite method of "return to nature" was not the same in all cases. The Brook Farmers (1841–1847) and the settlers in Alcott's Fruitlands colony (1843), as well as the later Phalansteries in which such men as W. H. Channing and Horace Greeley sought to realize Fourier's social teachings, found no more sympathy with Thoreau than they did with Emerson; for these men salvation was not to be got by community living with its necessary limitations upon individualism. Thoreau's opinion of these experiments is forcibly expressed in his journal: "As for these communities, I think I had rather keep bachelor's hall in hell than go to board in heaven." He was determined to become the captain of his soul far more absolutely than was possible under Brook Farm conditions.

One day toward the end of March, 1845, Thoreau borrowed Alcott's ax, put it over his shoulder, and walked southward from Concord to Walden

Pond, about a mile and a half distant from the center of the town. The ax was dull, being the property of a philosopher, and the borrower, being a practical man, sharpened it for use. He then began to fell the trees that were needed for his purpose, and thus began the construction of the cabin which was to be his home for the next two years. He was a squatter on land belonging to Emerson, and his final choice of a retreat was made after one or two tentative glances in other directions. The idea of taking up the solitary life for a season had been in his mind for several years. As early as 1841, he wrote of it in his journal, and talked about it with Margaret Fuller. The spot chosen for the experiment was one to which many associations, both personal and legendary, were attached. It had been a favorite haunt of his boyhood, when his brother was the blithe companion of his rambles, and was well provided with romantic traditions of Indians, witches, and outlaws.

During the months of May and June, Thoreau toiled away at the task of shaping his timbers and digging his cellar. He got the necessary planks by dismantling a shanty which he bought from an Irishman, and finally the frame of the house was completed. Then came the raising, in which he had the help of his friends, among them Alcott and G. W. Curtis, the latter then a farmer's apprentice. We read in

"Walden": "No man was ever more honored in the character of his raisers than I. They are destined, I trust, to assist at the raising of loftier structures one day." When the cabin was up, it covered ten by fifteen feet of ground, and had a closet, a garret, a window, two doors, and a fireplace. When autumn came, a chimney was built, and the walls were plastered. The only expenditure Thoreau had to make was for material, and $28.12½ was the entire money cost of his home. He took full possession on the Fourth of July, and one may find a sort of significance in the fact that Independence Day was the day upon which he thus asserted his individual independence of society.

He writes very fully in "Walden" of the reasons which impelled him to this experiment. "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and

genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to 'glorify God and enjoy him forever.'" The writer of this surely ranges himself with the prophets,—with Ruskin and Emerson and Carlyle; in the very essence of the matter with Goethe, the clearest-sighted of all modern men.

Thoreau at Walden Pond was not so much of a hermit as the public often thinks him to have been. He puts the case succinctly when he says that he went to the woods to "transact some private business." Channing speaks of the retreat as a "writing-case" and as a "wooden inkstand," adding that "he bivouacked there and really lived at home, where he went every day." While this is not literally true, there is no doubt that he remained in constant intercourse with his family and friends. He often went in to take supper and spend the evening with them, and they in turn came frequently to the cabin, bringing welcome delicacies. Channing stayed with him on one occasion for two weeks, and made many briefer visits. There were also many other visitors, and he says that at one time he had "twenty-five or thirty

souls, with their bodies" as his guests. Some of the visitors were mere curiosity-seekers, and others were "self-styled reformers, the greatest bores of all"; these he did not suffer gladly, and he tried to let them "know when their visit had terminated" by quietly taking up his tasks, and answering their questions "from greater and greater remoteness." As a matter of fact, he protested against being stamped as a recluse, and said: "I naturally am no hermit, but might possibly sit out the sturdiest frequenter of the bar-room, if my business called me thither."

He provided for his small expenses by doing an occasional job of surveying for the neighboring farmers, by working at some of his various trades in the village, and by the sale of his produce. The latter item in his budget was not considerable; the net profit from his first summer amounting to eight dollars. He earned this by the cultivation of two and a half acres; the second season he cultivated only a third of an acre, but more intensively, and did a little better. Beans were his chief reliance, both as a crop and as a food, and at one time he had seven miles of them, reckoning by the rows of poles. He worked in the field during the season from five o'clock until noon, besides doing his house-cleaning and getting his breakfast. In the afternoon he felt free to roam about the woods, to fish in the pond, or to visit the village. In the evening, he liked to lie in his boat,

"playing the flute, and watching the perch, which I seemed to have charmed, hovering around me, and the moon traveling over the ribbed bottom, which was strewed with the wrecks of the forest." At one time, he was commissioned by Agassiz to collect natural history specimens, mainly fishes, and send them to Cambridge. When winter came, he read industriously, wrote in his journal, and put the "Week" into shape for publication. It was on the whole a happy time of self-examination and self-development, while of the scene we may say in Channing's words:

> "More fitting place I cannot fancy now
> For such a man to let the line run off
> The mortal reel, such patience hath the lake,
> Such gratitude and cheer are in the pines."

The Mexican War was going on during the latter part of Thoreau's "Walden" period, and intensified his feelings on the subject of slavery. Fugitive negroes occasionally found their way to safety by passing through the State of Massachusetts, and one such fugitive, whom he helped "to forward toward the North Star," is mentioned by Thoreau. Probably this was the negro thus referred to (February, 1847), in Alcott's diary: "Our friend the fugitive, who has shared now a week's hospitalities with us (sawing and piling my wood), feels this new trust of Freedom yet

unsafe here in New England, and so has left us this morning for Canada. We supplied him with the means of journeying, and bade him Godspeed to a freer land. His stay with us has given image and a name to the dire entity of slavery." Upon the strength of such evidence as this, Thoreau's cabin has sometimes been spoken of as a station of the Underground Railroad, but it was not that in any definite sense. Comparatively few fugitives took the New England route, in any case, and those who found their way to Concord were cared for in "specially prepared houses" that were much safer hiding-places than Thoreau's lodge would have been. This is the testimony of Dr. S. A. Jones, who has made a special investigation of the subject.

There is no doubt, however, that Thoreau would have done his part, if called upon, to aid any fugitive slaves that might have come his way. How strongly he felt upon the subject is best illustrated by his refusal to pay the poll-tax, a refusal which lodged him in jail for a night. This is one of the most generally familiar of the incidents in his life, but is not clearly understood. He had anarchistic predispositions, but had no intention of repudiating the implied contract which each individual makes with the society in which he grows up. Several years earlier, he had refused to pay a church-tax, because he did not think its specific purpose a legitimate rea-

son for taxation. So in 1845, when it was evident that the nation was about to plunge into a wicked war for the acquisition of new slave territory, and when another son of his native state could exclaim:

> "Massachusetts, God forgive her,
> She's akneelin' with the rest,"

Thoreau thought he would make his small individual protest. He did not want his dollar to "buy a man, or a musket to shoot one with." "I meet this American government," he said, "or its representative the State government, directly, and face to face, once a year—no more—in the person of its tax-gatherer. . . . If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood." This explanation gives point to the bit of dialogue reported between Thoreau and Emerson when the latter came to see him in the town jail. "Henry, why are you here?" was the visitor's query. "Why are you not here?" was the neat reply. The story has other humorous aspects. The perplexed tax-gatherer asked what he ought to do under the circumstances, and Thoreau suggested that he resign his office. The prisoner afterwards described his night in jail with a fine sense of detachment. "It was a closer view of my native town. I was fairly

inside of it. I had never seen its institutions before. I began to comprehend what its inhabitants were about." The next morning Aunt Maria brought the tax to the place of durance, and the prisoner was released, "mad as the devil," according to the jailer's testimony. The afternoon of that day found him huckleberrying on a hill two miles from Concord, a spot from which, as he said, "the State was nowhere to be seen."

V

In the fall of 1847, Thoreau emerged from his Walden retirement, a man of thirty, a well-developed character, a deep student of literature and a deeper student of the book of nature, and a master of prose style. His own words were: "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps, it seemed to me that I had several lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one." Thoreau again went to the Emerson house to live, and made himself more useful to the family than ever, for its head was away on his second European trip, which lasted from October, 1847, to July, 1848. How well the visitor fitted into the household may be seen from this charming bit from one of his letters to the absent friend.

"Lidian [Mrs. Emerson] and I make very good housekeepers. She is a very dear sister to me.

Ellen and Edith and Eddy and Aunty Brown keep up the tragedy and comedy and tragic-comedy of life as usual. The two former have not forgotten their old acquaintance; even Edith carries a young memory in her head, I find. Eddy can teach us all how to pronounce. If you should discover any rare hoard of wooden or pewter horses, I have no doubt he will know how to appreciate it. He occasionally surveys mankind from my shoulders as wisely as ever Johnson did. I respect him not a little, though it is I that lift him up so unceremoniously. And sometimes I have to set him down in a hurry, according to his 'mere will and good pleasure.' He very seriously asked me, the other day, 'Mr. Thoreau, will you be my father?' I am occasionally Mr. Rough-and-trouble with him that I may not miss *him*, and lest he should miss *you* too much. So you must come back soon, or you will be superseded." The letter from which the above passage is taken contains also a veiled allusion to a love affair, if that name may be given to an episode in which Thoreau's only part was an energetic disclaimer of the tender passion. "I have had a tragic correspondence, for the most part all on one side, with Miss ———. She did really wish to—I hesitate to write—marry me. That is the way they spell it. Of course I did not write a deliberate answer. How could I deliberate upon it? I sent back as distinct a *no* as I have

learned to pronounce after considerable practice, and I trust that this *no* has succeeded. Indeed, I wished that it might burst, like hollow shot, after it had struck and buried itself and made itself felt there. *There was no other way*, I really had anticipated no such foe as this in my career." Thoreau's biographers fail to enlighten us concerning this assault upon the citadel of his independence, but the passage throws an instructive light upon his character, and for that reason seems worth quoting.

After Emerson's return in the summer of 1848, Thoreau went back to his father's house, and remained under the family roof for the rest of his life, except, of course, when away upon his excursions. The pursuit of literature now began to provide him with a small part, at least, of the small means needed for his support, although for years afterward he had to resort at times to his old trades of pencil-making and surveying. It was through Horace Greeley's friendly offices—a Horace turned Mæcenas, as Mr. Sanborn puts it—that an essay on Carlyle was placed in "Graham's Magazine," and a paper on "Ktaadn and the Maine Woods" in Sartain's "Union Magazine." These appeared in 1847 and 1848, respectively, and the two brought him, eventually, after Greeley had sufficiently dunned the publishers, the sum of one hundred and twenty-five dollars. An essay on "Resistance to Civil Government," which

appeared in the "Æsthetic Papers" (Boston, 1849), does not seem to have brought any return. Writing to Greeley in 1848, in grateful acknowledgment of his efforts, Thoreau gives this account of himself: "It is five years that I have been maintaining myself entirely by manual labor,—not getting a cent from any other quarter or employment. Now this toil has occupied so few days—perhaps a single month, spring and fall each—that I must have had more leisure than any of my brethren for study and literature. I have done rude work of all kinds. From July, 1845, to September, 1847, I lived by myself in the forest, in a fairly good cabin, plastered and warmly covered, which I built myself. There I earned all I needed and kept to my own affairs. During that time my weekly outlay was but seven-and-twenty cents, and I had an abundance of all sorts. Unless the human race perspire more than I do, there is no occasion to live by the sweat of their brow."

A postscript to the above letter says: "My book grows in bulk as I work on it." The book was "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," long planned, and now nearly ready for publication. The publishers fought shy of so nondescript a work, and were willing to print it only at the author's expense. It was upon this basis that an edition of a thousand copies was made, in 1849, by a Boston

bookseller. *Habent sua fata libelli.* The fate of this one was to collect dust upon the shelves, save for some three hundred copies sold or given out for review, until 1853, when the seven hundred remaining copies, bound and unbound, were unloaded upon their imperturbable author, who thus commented upon the incident: "The wares are sent me at last, and I have an opportunity to examine my purchase. They are something more substantial than fame, as my back knows, which has borne them up two flights of stairs to a place similar to that to which they trace their origin. . . . I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself. Is it not well that the author should behold the fruits of his labor? My works are piled up in my chamber, half as high as my head, my *opera omnia.* This is authorship. These are the work of my brain. There was just one piece of good luck in the venture. The unbound were tied up by the printer four years ago in stout paper wrappers, and inscribed 'H. D. Thoreau's Concord River, fifty copies.' So Munroe had only to cross out 'River' and write 'Mass.,' and deliver them to the express-man at once. I can see now what I write for, and the result of my labors. Nevertheless, in spite of this result, sitting beside the inert mass of my works, I take up my pen to-night, to record what thought or experience I may have had,

with as much satisfaction as ever." The book to which the public then gave little heed is not Thoreau's best, by any means, and its incoherency was against it. Far from being a straightforward account of the voyage which it pretended to describe, it was a receptacle into which the writer had pitchforked, without much thought of arrangement, his poems and papers that had appeared in "The Dial," together with passages from his journal, and brief discourses upon such special subjects as friendship and religion.

A year before the publication of the "Week," Thoreau had made the acquaintance of Harrison Blake of Worcester, who became one of his closest intellectual intimates, through a lengthy correspondence and much mutual visiting. After Thoreau's death, it was Blake who acted as his literary executor, and brought together the contents of his several posthumous volumes. The relation between the two men was curiously impersonal, and the biographer looks in vain to their correspondence for material facts. Many of Thoreau's longest letters were written to Blake, but they deal mostly in abstractions. Alcott speaks of Blake's love for Thoreau as partaking of "the exceeding tenderness of woman," and describes it as "a pure Platonism to the fineness and delicacy of the devotee's sensibility." This seems to be an "Orphic saying," but the underlying meaning is plain enough. Soon after he had thus

gained a lifelong friend, Thoreau lost his sister Helen, who died in 1849. The year following was the date of the tragic death of Margaret Fuller, returning from Italy with her husband, the Marquis of Ossoli, and their child, and shipwrecked off Fire Island. Thoreau was one of the friends who hastened to the spot to recover the remains and do what else might yet be done in the way of service to friends and relatives. The philosophy which had helped to console him at the time of his brother's death was again helpful. He writes to Blake: "I have in my pocket a button which I ripped off the coat of the Marquis of Ossoli, on the seashore, the other day. Held up, it intercepts the light,—an actual button,—and yet all the life it is connected with is less substantial to me, and interests me less, than my faintest dream. Our thoughts are the epochs in our lives: all else is but as a journal of the winds that blew while we were here."

It was in the fall of 1849 that Thoreau, with a companion, took the first of the Cape Cod tramps that were to provide material for several magazine articles, and finally for one of his posthumous books. On this and other similar journeyings, his equipment was of the simplest. "The cheapest way to travel," he said, "is to go afoot, carrying a dipper, a spoon, and a fish-line, some Indian meal, some salt, and some sugar. When you come to a brook or pond, you can

catch fish and cook them; or you can boil a hasty-pudding; or you can buy a loaf of bread at a farmer's house for fourpence, moisten it in the next brook that crosses the road, and dip it into your sugar—this alone will last you a whole day." He wore comfortable old clothes, and was an adept at camping out. He was fond of strong tea, which he made in his tin dipper, and liked to take along a thick slice of plum cake to eat with it. His luggage, thus reduced to its lowest terms, was tied up in a handkerchief or a piece of brown paper, and he was independent of both inns and railroads. If he did not care to spend the night out of doors, a farmhouse or fisherman's cabin was usually available. On these expeditions, he was generally taken for an itinerant peddler or tinker, and was now and then offered employment by some farmer whose hands were more than full. All unknown to themselves at the time, Thoreau and his companion were the recipients of police attentions during this first Cape Cod journey. The Provincetown bank had just been robbed, and the two tramps, naturally regarded as suspicious characters, were tracked the whole length of the Cape by the officers of the law.

A year later, in September, 1850, Thoreau and Channing spent a week in Canada, visiting Montreal and Quebec, and getting some glimpses of the surrounding country. "Sights" in the ordinary sense

did not greatly appeal to the man who had said that the sight of a marsh-hawk in the Concord meadows was of more interest to him than the entry of the allies into Paris. Nevertheless, he was not a little impressed by the immense Church of Notre Dame, and probably a few days in some old world capital would have dissipated in considerable degree his prejudice against the works of man. The Canadians seemed to him "to be suffering between two fires—the soldiery and the priesthood." When he afterwards sought to make "copy" out of the expedition he found it difficult. "I fear that I have not got much to say about Canada, not having seen much; what I got by going to Canada was a cold." Both the Cape Cod and the Canadian journeys took literary shape in papers that appeared in "Putnam's Monthly Magazine," then just started. But Thoreau was an uncompromising contributor, and a difference of opinion with the editor caused him to withdraw the papers before they had been published in full. Speaking of the "Canada story" in a letter of 1853 he says: "It concerns me but little, and probably is not worth the time it took to tell it. Yet I had absolutely no design whatever in my mind, but simply to report what I saw. I have inserted all of myself that was implicated, or made the excursion. It has come to an end, at any rate; they will print no more, but return me my MS. when it is

but little more than half done, as well as another I had sent them, because the editor requires the liberty to omit the heresies without consulting me,—a privilege California is not rich enough to bid for."

Thoreau's first excursion into the forests of Maine has already been mentioned. Two others were undertaken, in 1853 and 1857, respectively, and what he wrote concerning all three was put together into the posthumous volume entitled "The Maine Woods." A paper called "Chesuncook," resulting from the second of these excursions, was given to "The Atlantic Monthly" in 1858, and was the first of his several contributions to that magazine. It was chiefly a study of the moose, its natural history and habits, and the methods by which man pursued it to its destruction. The third excursion took him far into the wilderness and included over three hundred miles of canoeing. As an example of the reflections inspired by these Maine journeyings we may quote the following passage: "I am reminded by my journey how exceedingly new this country still is. You have only to travel for a few days into the interior and back parts even of many of the old States to come to that very America which the Northmen, and Cabot, and Gosnold, and Smith, and Raleigh visited. If Columbus was the first to discover the islands, Americus Vespucius and Cabot and the Puritans, and we their descendants, have discovered only the shores

of America. While the republic has acquired a history world-wide, America is still unsettled and unexplored. Like the English in New Holland, we live only on the shores of a continent even yet, and hardly know where the rivers come from which float our navy."

In the summer of 1854, "Walden" appeared. The fortunes of this book, the second of the only two which Thoreau published, were in marked contrast to those of the "Week." The earlier book had left him saddled with a debt which it required several years for him to work off; the later book took care of itself financially, and had a reasonable success from the publisher's point of view. It attracted an unexpected amount of attention, was favorably noticed in many quarters, and so enhanced the author's reputation that his services as a lecturer grew to be in frequent demand, and came near to emancipating him from the drudgery of manual labor. Soon after the book was published Emerson wrote to a friend: "All American kind are delighted with 'Walden' as far as they have dared to say. The little pond sinks in these days as tremulous at its human fame. I do not know if the book has come to you yet, but it is cheerful, sparkling, readable, with all kinds of merits, and rising sometimes to very great heights. We count Henry the undoubted king of all American lions." An illustrative quotation may be given for

the purpose of setting forth Thoreau's philosophy of the simple life as excogitated during his hermit years. "Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary for ever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so-called

internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it as for them is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose." The success of "Walden" has been more than confirmed by the judgment of a later generation. It has been accepted as an American classic in the most typical sense, and stands out among the many volumes that now bear Thoreau's name as the best of them all.

The publication of "Walden" brought Thoreau a number of new friends. One of these was Mr. Daniel Ricketson, a Quaker of New Bedford, who bought a copy of the book, discovered in its author a congenial spirit, and straightway entered into correspondence with him. The exchange of letters was soon followed by an exchange of visits, and the two men remained intimate for the rest of Thoreau's life. The same year brought a visit from an Englishman—the only one with whom Thoreau ever had close acquaintance, although he had met Clough a couple of years earlier—one Thomas Cholmondeley, a nephew of Bishop Heber. He had been a pupil of Clough, who furnished him with letters to Emerson.

On his first visit to Concord, he appeared with the usual equipment of the traveling Englishman, including a valet—a strange phenomenon in that simple community. On his second visit four years later he was a less burdened traveler, having evidently taken to heart the philosophy of his American friends. The acquaintance thus made was continued by correspondence until Thoreau's death. It was early in 1855 that Mr. Frank B. Sanborn, who was to become Thoreau's biographer, came to Concord to live. He was just completing his course at Harvard, and had already been in correspondence with the author of "Walden." The acquaintance soon ripened into friendship, "and for two years or more I dined with him almost daily, and often joined in his walks and river voyages, or swam with him in some of our numerous Concord rivers." The following note was made early in the acquaintance. "Thoreau looks eminently *sagacious*—like a sort of wise, wild beast. He dresses plainly, wears a beard in his throat, and has a brown complexion." This note is our first introduction to the bearded Thoreau of the later portraits; in a portrait of only the year before he appears with a smooth face.

Early in 1856, Horace Greeley, who had actively befriended Thoreau for a number of years, proposed that he should come to the Chappaqua farm, thirty-six miles from New York, and act as tutor to the

editor's children. This offer was entertained, but eventually rejected. It led, however, to a visit to the farm later in the same year, when Thoreau was spending a short time in New York and vicinity. The occasion of this journey was an invitation to visit the Eagleswood community near Perth Amboy, New Jersey, for the double purpose of lecturing to them and surveying the tract of land upon which they had settled. This community, which numbered among its members the Grimké sisters, Theodore Weld, James G. Birney (who had been the presidential candidate of the Liberty Party in 1840), and other pioneer abolitionists, is the subject of an amusing letter to Sophia Thoreau, from which these extracts may be made. "Sunday forenoon I attended a sort of Quaker meeting . . . where it was expected that the Spirit would move me (I having been previously spoken to about it); and it, or something else, did—an inch or so. I said just enough to set them a little by the ears and make it lively. . . . There sat Mrs. Weld [Grimké] and her sister, two elderly gray-headed ladies, the former in extreme Bloomer costume which was what you may call remarkable; Mr. Arnold Buffum, with broad face and a great white beard, looking like a pier-head made of the cork-tree with the bark on, as if he could buffet a considerable wave; James G. Birney, formerly candidate for the presidency, with another particularly white head and

beard; Edward Palmer, the anti-money man (for whom communities were made), with his ample beard somewhat grayish. Some of them, I suspect, are very worthy people. . . . They all know more about your neighbors and acquaintances than you suspected." If anyone should cast doubts upon Thoreau's possession of a sense of humor, this letter ought to prove convincing.

It was only a few days after the letter was written that Thoreau, in company with Alcott, went to Brooklyn to call on Walt Whitman. The first "Leaves of Grass" was then only a year old, and few people had discovered it. Even as late as the year of Thoreau's death (1862), Emerson could speak in his funeral eulogy of the three men who had "of late years strongly impressed Mr. Thoreau," and, after naming John Brown, and his Indian guide in Maine, Joe Polis, could refer to Whitman as "a third person, not known to this audience." But there was no uncertainty in Thoreau's judgment of the man, as there had been no uncertainty the year before in Emerson's judgment of the work. When fresh from his impression of the meeting he wrote of Whitman: "He is apparently the greatest democrat the world has seen. Kings and aristocracy go by the board at once, as they have long deserved to. A remarkably strong though coarse nature, of a sweet disposition, and much prized by his friends." Two or three

weeks later, he wrote again: "I have just read his second edition (which he gave me), and it has done me more good than any reading for a long time. . . . I have found his poems exhilarating, encouraging. As for his sensuality,—and it may turn out to be less sensual than it appears,—I do not so much wish that those parts were not written, as that men and women were so pure that they could read them without harm, that is, without understanding them. One woman told me that no woman could read it,—as if a man could read what a woman could not. . . . We ought to rejoice greatly in him. He occasionally suggests something a little more than human. You can't confound him with the other inhabitants of Brooklyn or New York. How they must shudder when they read him! . . . Since I have seen him, I find that I am not disturbed by any brag or egoism in his book. He may turn out the least of a braggart of all, having a better right to be confident." One of the books sent by Thoreau in 1857 to his English friend was the "Leaves of Grass"—perhaps the first copy of Whitman to be read in England. When Cholmondeley attempted to read it to his stepfather, the Rev. Z. Macaulay, "that clergyman declared he would not hear it, and threatened to throw it in the fire." Cholmondeley himself wrote: "Is there actually such a man as Whitman? Has anyone seen or handled him? His is a tongue 'not understanded'

of the English people. I find *the gentleman* altogether left out of the book. It is the first book I have ever seen which I should call a 'new book.'"

VI

Mention has already been made of Thoreau's occasional friendly interest in the fugitive slaves that made their pilgrimage toward freedom by way of Concord. He was an avowed abolitionist, and he shared in the indignation with which Massachusetts resented, in 1854, the delivery of Anthony Burns into the hands of the slave-hunters. What he thought about this episode was forcibly expressed in his address on "Slavery in Massachusetts," delivered at Framingham on the occasion made memorable by Garrison's public burning of the Constitution of the United States. "I feel that my investment in life here is worth many per cent less since Massachusetts last deliberately sent back an innocent man, Anthony Burns, to slavery." The essay on "Resistance to Civil Government," and the incident of his brief tenancy of the Concord jail, afford other and earlier illustrations of his feelings upon this subject. They were all condensed in his statement: "The only government that I recognize is that power which establishes justice in the land." It is not surprising, then, that when the arch-abolitionist John Brown

visited Concord in 1857 as Mr. Sanborn's guest, he should have found Thoreau among the warmest of his new friends.

It is interesting to set beside this statement of Thoreau's attitude toward slavery a few passages illustrating the reaction of his independent mind upon another public matter—the panic of 1857—which loomed up just then as a thing of far greater significance than the agitation of the abolitionists. "This general failure, both private and public, is rather occasion for rejoicing, as reminding us whom we have at the helm,—that justice is always done. If our merchants did not most of them fail, and the banks too, my faith in the old laws of the world would be staggered. . . . If thousands are thrown out of employment, it suggests that they were not well employed. Why don't they take the hint? It is not enough to be industrious; so are the ants. What are you industrious about? . . . Not merely the Brook Farm and Fourierite communities, but now the community generally has failed. But there is the moonshine still, serene, beneficent, and unchanged. Hard times, I say, have this value, among others, that they show us what such promises are worth—where the *sure* banks are. I heard some merchant praised the other day because he had paid some of his debts, though it took nearly all he had (why, I've done as much as that myself many times,

and a little more), and then gone to board. What if he has? I hope he's got a good boarding-place, and can pay for it. It's not everybody that can. . . . Only think of a man in this new world, in his log cabin, in the midst of a corn and potato patch, talking about money being hard! So are flints hard; there is no alloy in them. What has that to do with his raising his food, cutting his wood (or breaking it), keeping in-doors when it rains, and, if need be, spinning and weaving his clothes?" This airy and whimsical dismissal of the very real evils of a period of commercial depression is not exactly satisfactory, although it is quite possible to understand Thoreau's point of view, and to realize that such judgments were the natural outcome of his philosophy of conduct.

The summer of 1858 drew Thoreau once more to the mountains, and early in June we find him, in company with Blake, climbing Monadnoc, and camping on its top in an extemporized hut. Channing says of his mountain climbing: "He ascended such hills as Monadnoc by his own path; would lay down his map on the summit and draw a line to the point he proposed to visit below,—perhaps forty miles away on the landscape, and set off bravely to make the short-cut. The lowland people wondered to see him scaling the heights as if he had lost his way, or at his jumping over their cow-yard fences,—

asking if he had fallen from the clouds." A month later we find him starting for the White Mountains in the company of his neighbor Edward Hoar. They journeyed from Concord in a wagon, and Thoreau thought the horse more of an impediment than a help. He also noted with regret the summer hotels that had been built among the mountains since his former visit nearly twenty years earlier. "Give me a spruce house made in the rain," he said. Having climbed to the summit of Mt. Washington, where the first "tip-top house" had already been put up and moored, he asked the landlord for a guide to Tuckerman's Ravine. On being told that it was too foggy for a guide to find the trail, he said: "If we cannot have a guide we will find it ourselves." Striking a bee-line, with the aid of map and pocket-compass, the ravine was soon reached. The narrative may be continued in Sanborn's words: "They went safely down the steep stairs into the chasm, where they found the midsummer iceberg they wished to see. But as they walked down the bed of the Peabody River, flowing from this ravine, over bowlders five or six feet high, the heavy packs on their shoulders weighed them down, and finally, Thoreau's foot slipping, he fell and sprained his ankle. He rose, but had not limped five steps from the place where he fell, when he said, 'Here is the arnica, anyhow,'—reached out his hand and plucked

the *Arnica mollis*, which he had not before found anywhere." The accident laid him up in camp for several days, after which they were joined by Blake and two others, completing the excursion in such enlarged company.

In November, 1858, Thoreau had the unexpected news that his English friend Cholmondeley was in Montreal, and on his way to Concord. His destination was the West Indies, and he tried to persuade Thoreau to accompany him, which the latter might have done, had it not been for the serious illness of his father. Leaving after a few days, Cholmondeley went to Virginia, then changed his plans and returned to Concord for another brief visit, then went back to England by the roundabout way of Canada and Jamaica. John Thoreau, after a lingering illness, died February 3, 1859, aged seventy-two. This reduced the family circle to the brother and sister, Henry and Sophia, and the mother, who lived until 1872. After the father's death, the children carried on the family business of pencil-making and the preparation of graphite, and Thoreau gained a little additional income by an occasional lecture. As a platform speaker, he was not particularly impressive, and he was always rather surprised that people should wish to hear him. He once wrote: "I am from time to time congratulating myself on my general want of success as a lecturer; apparent

want of success, but is it not a real triumph? I do my work clean as I go along, and they will not be likely to want me anywhere again. So there is no danger of my repeating myself, and getting to a barrel of sermons, which you must upset, and begin again with." And again: "Perhaps it always costs me more than it comes to to lecture before a promiscuous audience. It is so irreparable an injury done to my modesty even,—I become so indurated. . . . The lecturer gets fifty dollars a night, but what becomes of his winter? What consolation will it be hereafter to have fifty thousand dollars for living in the world? I should not like to exchange *any* of my life for money." Thoreau's lectures, like Emerson's, were made by delving into his note-books and journals, and then welding the rescued fragments into some sort of coherency.

On one occasion, at least, it must be admitted that Thoreau was an effective, because an impassioned, public speaker. Slavery was the one subject that could arouse him, as it aroused Emerson, from his attitude of serene indifferentism toward political controversies. And when John Brown, with his small band of devoted followers, made his famous raid at Harper's Ferry, Thoreau was all eager attention. Brown had been in Concord only a few days before, and it was from Sanborn's house, and from intimate fellowship with Thoreau and Emerson, that he had

started for Virginia. Brown fell into the hands of his captors October 16, 1859, and for the next seven weeks the country followed the lingering course of his trial, and awaited in breathless suspense its foregone conclusion. While others hesitated to speak, or temporized with their convictions, Thoreau did not. On the Sunday evening just two weeks after Brown's capture, a large audience gathered in the vestry of the old parish church of Concord (the very room in which the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts had met in 1774 to plan for armed resistance to Great Britain), and listened to the most important, and altogether the weightiest, of all Thoreau's public addresses. The address was repeated in Worcester a few days later, then the following Sunday in Boston, and its subsequent publication in the newspapers gave it a wide reading. The next year, it appeared, together with Emerson's two speeches in behalf of Brown, in the volume entitled "Echoes from Harper's Ferry." On December 21, the day of Brown's execution, Concord held a funeral service in his honor, and in the arrangements for this Thoreau took an active part.

A few extracts from "A Plea for Captain John Brown" must be given to illustrate the temper and the logic of this utterance: "On the whole, my respect for my fellow-men, except as one may outweigh a million, is not being increased these days. . . .

It turns what sweetness I have to gall, to hear, or hear of, the remarks of some of my neighbors. When we heard at first that he was dead, one of my townsmen observed that 'he died as the fool dieth'; which, pardon me, for an instant suggested a likeness in him dying to my neighbor living. Others, craven-hearted, said disparagingly, that he threw his life away, because he resisted the government. Which way would they have thrown *their* lives, pray? —such as would praise a man for attacking singly an ordinary band of thieves and murderers. . . . 'But he won't gain anything by it.' Well, no, I don't suppose he could get four-and-sixpence a day for being hung, take the year round; but then he stands a chance to save a considerable part of his soul,—and *such* a soul!—when *you* do not. No doubt you can get more in your market for a quart of milk than for a quart of blood, but that is not the market that heroes carry their blood to. . . . What have Massachusetts and the North sent a few *sane* representatives to Congress for, of late years?—to declare with effect what kind of sentiments? All their speeches put together and boiled down,—and probably they themselves will confess it,—do not match for manly directness and force, and for simple truth, the few casual remarks of crazy John Brown, on the floor of the Harper's Ferry engine-house,—that man whom you are about to hang, to send

to the other world, though not to represent *you* there. . . . The same indignation that is said to have cleared the temple once will clear it again. The question is not about the weapon, but the spirit in which you use it. No man has appeared in America, as yet, who loved his fellow-man so well, and treated him so tenderly. He lived for him. He took up his life and he laid it down for him. . . . This event advertises me that there is such a fact as death,—the possibility of a man's dying. It seems as if no man had ever lived in America before; for in order to die you must first have lived. I don't believe in the hearses, and palls, and funerals that they have had. There was no death in the case, because there had been no life; they merely rotted or sloughed off, pretty much as they had rotted or sloughed along. No temple's veil was rent, only a hole dug somewhere. Let the dead bury their dead. The best of them fairly ran down like a clock. Franklin,—Washington,—they were let off without dying; they were merely missing one day. I hear a good many pretend that they are going to die; or that they have died, for aught that I know. Nonsense! I'll defy them to do it. They haven't got life enough in them. They'll deliquesce like fungi; and keep a hundred eulogists mopping the spot where they left off. Only half a dozen or so have died since the world began." How Ibsen—the Ibsen of "Brand"

and "Peer Gynt"—would have relished these observations! And how effective is this repressed indignation, this scarcely veiled contempt for the pettiness and hypocrisy of the commonplace life! The whole address reminds one of a volcanic crater whose crust has cooled, and shows no visible sign of the fires beneath, but leaves no doubt of the intensity of the heat just below the surface.

A second encampment on Monadnoc, in company with Channing, was made in the summer of 1860. "We went up in the rain—wet through—and found ourselves in a cloud there at mid-afternoon, in no situation to look about for the best place for a camp. . . . Having a good hatchet, I proceeded to build a substantial house, which Channing declared the handsomest he ever saw. (He never camped out before, and was, no doubt, prejudiced in its favor.) This was done about dark, and by that time we were nearly as wet as if we had stood in a hogshead of water. We then built a fire before the door, directly on the site of our little camp of two years ago, and it took a long time to burn through its remains to the earth beneath. Standing before this, and turning round slowly, like meat that is roasting, we were as dry, if not drier, than ever, after a few hours. . . . After several nights' experience, Channing came to the conclusion that he was 'lying outdoors,' and inquired what was the largest beast that might nibble

his legs there. I fear that he did not improve all the night, as he might have done, to sleep. I had asked him to go and spend a week there. We spent five nights, being gone six days, for C. suggested that six working days made a week, and I saw that he was ready to *decamp*. However, he found his account in it as well as I." Channing found a literal account in this excursion, and gives it to us in his biography of Thoreau. He tries to be enthusiastic about the experience, but the true inwardness of his feelings comes out when he writes in the following strain: "The fatigue, the blazing sun, the face getting broiled, the pint-cup never scoured, shaving unutterable, your stockings dreary, having taken to peat, —not all the books in the world, as Sancho says, could contain the adventures of a week in camping."

Thoreau's constitution, hardened as it was to outdoor life, had been giving way for several years, and it was rather reckless for him to subject it to such a strain as this. As early as 1855, he had spoken of his "months of feebleness," and in 1857 of his "two-year old invalidity." The illness which was finally to prove fatal began with a severe cold in December, 1860, which grew into a distinct case of tuberculosis. His last expedition, made in the spring and summer of the following year, was the first that he had ever made with health as a prime object of pursuit, and was the most extensive of all his journeyings. In

company with young Horace Mann, son of the great educator, he set out for the Mississippi. He made his way to St. Paul, remained in that vicinity for about three weeks, and then went some three hundred miles up the Minnesota River to Redwood, an important Indian agency. Here he witnessed a Sioux council and dance. He returned to Concord in July, not apparently benefited by his trip. The letters to Sanborn and Ricketson in which the Minnesota journey is described were the last written by Thoreau's own hand. As far as he could write at all during the few remaining months of his life, he worked upon the preparation of manuscripts for the "Atlantic Monthly." Fields had now become the editor of that magazine, and Thoreau was willing to resume the relations which he had broken off at the time of Lowell's editorship. Nothing save the early paper on "Chesuncook" appeared during his lifetime, but the "Atlantic" published three essays in the year of his death, and four others in the two years immediately following.

Consumption made rapid progress during the winter of 1861-1862. Just before Christmas, Sophia Thoreau wrote of her brother: "His spirits do not fail him; he continues in his usual serene mood, which is very pleasant for his friends as well as himself." Three weeks later, Alcott wrote: "He grows feebler day by day, and is evidently failing and fading from

our sight. He gets some sleep, has a pretty good appetite, reads at intervals, takes notes of his readings, and likes to see his friends, conversing, however, with difficulty, as his voice partakes of his general debility. . . . Our woods and fields are sorrowing, though not in sombre, but in robes of white, so becoming to the piety and probity they have known so long, and soon are to miss." He had all kinds of visitors during his illness, including the kind who are concerned about people's souls. "One world at a time," was his reply to the visitor who tried to direct his thoughts to the future life, and to the visitor who was anxious to know if he had made his peace with God he replied that he had "never quarrelled with Him." The last words of the last letter written at his dictation were these: "You ask particularly after my health. I suppose that I have not many months to live; but, of course, I know nothing about it. I may add that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing." He died May 6, 1862, and was buried in Sleepy Hollow. Emerson made the funeral address, and Alcott read "Sic Vita," one of Thoreau's poems. He had said, in anticipation of his end: "For joy I could embrace the earth. I shall delight to be buried in it. And then I think of those amongst men who will know that I love them, though I tell them not."

It is pleasant to take leave of Thoreau with these

words echoing in our ears. They are the best refutation of the accusations of misanthropy and egotism that were once foolishly made against him. Hardly more felicitous were the labels attached to him by those of his contemporaries who had some understanding of his mode of thought. A grain of truth but barely more than a grain—is expressed in such designations as a "Yankee Stoic" and an "American Diogenes." Just what was meant by the Scotchman who described him for us as a "stoico-epicurean adiaphorist" is not easy to explain. Channing was the happiest of his nicknamers in calling him the "poet-naturalist," although he was hardly a poet in the literal sense, and his naturalist quality was not of the sort which science stamps with approval. His lifelong aim was to lay hold upon the essentials of life, to escape from the trickery of its conventions, to realize himself in the fullest sense. Even in youth, his aspiration thus rose toward its aim:

"Great God! I ask thee for no meaner pelf,
That than I may not disappoint myself;
That in my conduct I may soar as high
As I can now discern with this clear eye.
That my weak hand may equal my firm faith,
And my life practice more than my tongue saith;
That my low conduct may not show,
Nor my relenting lines,
That I thy purpose did not know,
Or overrated thy designs."

The years brought ample fulfilment of this prayer, and their rewards, if not those for which most men strive, were those which he most greatly desired. "As a preacher," he wrote, "I should be prompted to tell men, not so much how to get their wheat-bread cheaper, as of the bread of life compared with which *that* is bran. Let a man only taste these loaves, and he becomes a skilful economist at once. He'll not waste much time in earning those." Thus feeding his soul upon Dante's *pan degli 'Angeli*, he developed that rich and distinctive personality which, as his life recedes from our view, becomes yearly a more instructive example to his fellow-men, quickening their individualism, and arousing them to the seriousness of the task of saving their separate souls. Thoreau's own soul, said Emerson at the funeral, "was made for the noblest society; he had in a short life exhausted the capabilities of this world; wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home."

George William Curtis

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

I

In the line of American essayists, the legitimate successor of Irving, Emerson, and Thoreau is found in George William Curtis. The delicate charm, the sunny temper, and the genial satirical gift that made Irving the idol of American readers in the days of our new-born literature were renewed half a century later in the personality of the occupant of the Easy Chair. The gracious spiritual effluence of Emerson molded his life in its most impressionable period, and the sturdy individualism of Thoreau taught him the lesson of the self-centred soul, the strength that springs from devotion to high principle and faith in the guidance of the light within. And when the time was ripe, and his powers had reached full maturity, he bettered the instruction of his predecessors by entering the arena, throwing himself into the turmoil of civic strife, and becoming a practical force for the furthering of the ends of righteousness in public life. This flowering of philosophy into deed, this dedication of literary faculty to the service of the state, at a sacrifice of personal ease and inclination that is almost

Miltonic in its example, gives to Curtis his crowning distinction as a figure in American literature. When he was just fifty years old, and had achieved a commanding position among our men of light and leading, his friend Lowell addressed him in words which exactly described both the sacrifice and the achievement.

> "Had letters kept you, every wreath were yours;
> Had the World tempted, all its chariest doors
> Had swung on flattered hinges to admit
> Such high-bred manners, such good-natured wit;
> At courts, in senates, who so fit to serve?
> And both invited, but you would not swerve,
> All meaner prizes waiving that you might
> In civic duty spend your heat and light,
> Unpaid, untrammelled, with a sweet disdain
> Refusing posts men grovel to obtain.
> Good Man all own you; what is left me, then,
> To heighten praise with but Good Citizen?"

The story of Curtis's life will reveal how admirably it is fitted by this description.

In May, 1635, when the great Puritan emigration was at full tide, the Elizabeth and Ann left the port of London for the Massachusetts Bay Colony. She carried seven passengers, duly certified as in "conformitie to the orders and discipline of the Church of England", having "taken the oaths of alleg: and suprem:", one of the seven being Henry Curtis, aged twenty-seven. He settled at Watertown, afterwards

removing to Sudbury. His son Ephraim became the first settler of Worcester. Ephraim's son John fought in the French and Indian War, was a loyalist at the outbreak of the Revolution, and with difficulty made his peace with his fellow-townsmen. John's great-grandson George was born in Worcester in 1796, removed to Providence, Rhode Island, married a daughter of Chief Justice Burrill of that State, became a United States Senator, and, as such, opposed the Missouri Compromise. He had two sons, James Burrill Curtis and George William Curtis. His wife died when George was two years of age, and he took a second wife nine years later. He is described by his oldest son as a man of "high integrity, sound, practical judgment, and excellent business talents, together with political and literary taste. He was popular among his associates—leading business and professional men—in Providence and New York. He was most affectionate and beloved in his family, and extremely kind and indulgent to his children, though sharp and severe in his demands as to manners and morals. He valued truthfulness and honesty above all other qualities, and his example and influence in these respects early impressed both George and me very deeply." The same writer describes the second wife (the only mother that George ever knew) as "a woman of much good sense and practical energy, of strong and generous

sympathies, and of high public spirit and piety: and she added to these things literary cultivation decidedly above the average. She wrote with ease, whether in letters or compositions, a full, graceful, flowing, delightful English style."

Such were the parental influences that shaped the childhood of George William Curtis, born in the sixth generation from the pioneer settler, in Providence, February 24, 1824. For five years, from six to eleven, he was sent to school at Jamaica Plain, near Boston, then, when his father remarried in 1835, he was placed in the Providence schools, where he studied for four years. Then, in 1839, when the boy was fifteen, he went with his father to live in New York. This ended his school education, although he continued to receive instructions at home, from parents and tutors, for some years longer. Of his boyhood life no detailed account has been preserved, but some facts may be gathered from his early books, which were often reminiscent as well as fanciful. "Trumps" gives us some glimpses of his school days at Jamaica Plain, and "Prue and I" provides a pleasant picture of the way in which Providence appealed to the boy's free and eager imagination. He was particularly captivated by the shipping at the docks. "Sometimes a great ship, an East Indiaman, with rusty, seamed, blistering sides and dingy sails, came slowly moving up the harbor, with

an air of indolent self-importance and consciousness of superiority, which inspired me with profound respect. . . . Long after the confusion of unloading was over, and the ship lay as if all voyages were ended, I dared to creep timorously along the edges of the dock, and, at great risk of falling in the black water of its huge shadow, I placed my hand upon the hot hulk and so established a mystic and exquisite connection with Pacific Islands; with palm groves and all the passionate beauties they embower; with jungles, Bengal tigers, pepper, and the crushed feet of Chinese fairies. I touched Asia, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Happy Islands. I would not believe that the heat I felt was of our Northern sun; to my finer sympathy, it burned with equatorial fervor." Some ten years later, these day-dreams were to be realized in part, as far as might be from a sojourn in Palestine and a voyage up the Nile.

George's brother Burrill, two years his senior, was his schoolmate and constant companion at home and abroad for about twenty-five years. This brother, who afterwards went to England to live, is ideally sketched, both as to person and character, under the guise of "our cousin the curate" in the pages of "Prue and I." "His mind, large in grasp and subtle in perception, naturally commanded his companions, while the lustre of his character allured those who could not understand him. The asceticism occasionally showed

itself is a vein of hardness, or rather of severity, in his treatment of others. He did what he thought it his duty to do, but he forgot that few could see the right so closely as he, and very few of those few could so calmly obey the least command of conscience. . . . I have not seen him for many years; but when we parted, his head had the intellectual symmetry of Milton's, without the Puritanic stoop, and with the stately grace of a cavalier." After George's death, his biographer, Mr. Edward Cary, was supplied by this brother with notes of their life during the ten years following their return to Providence from the school at Jamaica Plain. Those notes are chiefly interesting as revealing the influence of Emerson upon the two boys, an influence which allied them to the transcendental movement, and made them fellow-boarders at Brook Farm. "Our coming into contact with this movement," we read in these notes, "and especially with its leader and moderator, proved to be the cardinal event of our youth; and I cannot but think that the seed then sown took such deep root as to flower continuously in our later years, and make us both the confirmed 'independents' that we were and are, while fully conscious at the same time of the obligation of living in all possible harmony with our fellows." The boys first heard Emerson lecture on "The Over-Soul" in Providence, and afterwards frequently there and elsewhere. George was perhaps

less stirred than his brother, "but he so far shared my enthusiastic admiration as to be led a willing captive to Emerson's attractions, and to the incidental attractions of the movement of which he was the head." The brothers were not carried away by the extravagances of the movement (any more than Emerson himself was), although Burrill experimented with vegetarianism, and both affected certain harmless vagaries of dress. They did not enlist themselves in any "cause," and were "intent mainly, not on reforming others, or reforming society at large, but on the ordering of our own individual lives."

When the Curtis family went to live in New York in 1839, they made a home in Washington Place, and fitted into what was in the best sense the best society of the city. They were members of the Unitarian congregation of Dr. Dewey and Dr. Bellows. The senior Curtis was cashier, and afterwards president, of the Bank of Commerce. George continued his studies, indulged in a brief mercantile experiment, and was already developing the social graces that made him beloved by all his associates. In 1842, when George was eighteen and his brother twenty, they told their father that they wished to join the Brook Farm Community, not as members, but as scholars and boarders. The father looked askance at the project, but, as they were already convalescing from their attack of transcendentalism, never having

had it in other than a mild form, his consent was given, and the next year and a half was spent among the plain livers, high thinkers, and dilettante farmers of West Roxbury. The community had been in existence for only a year, and its members were still in the frolic mood, hopeful and high-hearted.

Most accounts of Brook Farm concern themselves with its community life, the sharing of toil and recreation that was its fundamental principle. The fact that it was also a school to which young people might be sent, paying for their board and tuition, is often lost sight of in the discussion. As a matter of fact, the school was much more profitable than the farm, and was largely attended by boys and girls whose parents took a sympathetic interest in the principles of the association. It offered a six years' college preparatory course, and a three years' course in practical agriculture. Each pupil, however, was required to give one hour a day to some sort of manual work. The Curtis boys went there as scholars, to study philosophy with George Ripley, Greek and German with Charles A. Dana, Latin and music with John S. Dwight. Writing home soon after he was settled in his new surroundings, George thus describes them: "My life is summery enough here. We breakfast at six, and from seven to twelve I am at work. After dinner, these fair days permit no homage but to their beauty, and I am fain to woo their smiles in

the shades and sunlight of the woods. A festal life for me before whom the great sea stretches which must be sailed; yet this summer air teaches life-navigation, and I listen to the flowing streams, and to the cool rush of the winds among the trees, with an increase of that hope which is the only pole-star of life."

Long years afterward, Curtis had a good deal to say, writing in the Easy Chair, about these halycon days of his ripening manhood. "The society at Brook Farm was composed of every kind of person. There were the ripest scholars, men and women of the most æsthetic culture and accomplishment, young farmers, seamstresses, mechanics, preachers—the industrious, the lazy, the conceited, the sentimental. But they were associated in such a spirit and under such conditions that, with some extravagance, the best of everybody appeared, and there was a kind of high *esprit de corps*—at least, in the earlier or golden age of the colony. There was plenty of steady, essential, hard work, for the founding of an earthly paradise upon a rough New England farm is no pastime. But with the best intention, and much practical knowledge and industry and devotion, there was in the nature of the case an inevitable lack of method, and the economical failure was almost a foregone conclusion. But there were never such witty potato-patches and such sparkling cornfields

before or since. The weeds were scratched out of the ground to the music of Tennyson or Browning, and the nooning was as gay and bright as any brilliant midnight at Ambrose's. But in the midst of all was one figure, the practical farmer, an honest neighbor who was not drawn to the enterprise by any spiritual attraction, but was hired at good wages to superintend the work, and who always seemed to be regarding the whole affair with the most good-natured wonder as a prodigious masquerade."

Thus the philosophical essayist, summing it all up in the light of reflection. But to the boy we suspect that it had its more trivial aspects. The following notes are by Mrs. Kirby, who was at Brook Farm for about the same period as Curtis. "Once we had a masquerade picnic in the woods, where we were thrown into convulsions of laughter at the sight of George W. Curtis dressed as Fanny Ellsler, in a low-necked, short-sleeved, book-muslin dress and a tiny ruffled apron, making courtesies and pirouetting down the path. . . . In the midwinter we had a fancy-dress ball in the parlors of the Pilgrim House, when the Shaws and Russells, generous friends of the association, came attired as priests and dervishes. The beautiful Anna Shaw was superb as a portly Turk in quilted robe, turban, mustache, and cimeter, and bore herself with grave dignity. George W. Curtis, as Hamlet, led the quadrille with Carrie Shaw

as a Greek girl. His sad and solemn 'reverence' contrasted charmingly with her sunny ease. He acted the Dane to the life, his bearing, the melancholy light in his eyes, his black-plumed head-cover, and his rapier glittering under his short black cloak, which fell apart in the dance, were all perfect. It was a picture long to be remembered, and as long as I could watch these two I had no desire to take part in the dance myself." In these diversions, George was always a leading spirit, and he also frequently gave pleasure to his associates by singing for them. We note with satisfaction testimony to the effect that he was "not ever guilty of singing a comic song." He seems to have made himself agreeable in as many ways as possible, now waiting on the table, now trimming the lamp-wicks, now helping the women to hang out the washing, and afterwards dropping on the dancing-room floor the clothes-pins that had inadvertently found their way into some pocket. One of his associates thus sets down the impression that he made upon them. "George, though only eighteen, seemed much older, like a man of twenty-five, possibly, with a peculiar elegance, if I may so express it; great and admirable attention, as I recollect, when listening to anyone; courteous recognition of others' convictions and even prejudices; and never a personal animosity of any kind."

At the close of their second summer at Brook Farm,

the brothers left it to spend the fall and winter mainly in their father's New York home. One of the warmest friendships that George had formed during his stay in the community was with John S. Dwight, who taught him music. His letters to Dwight during the four years following number upwards of two score, and are the chief reliance of the biographer for the period preceding the departure of Curtis for his four years' sojourn abroad. The first of these letters describe a jaunt to Providence and Newport made before the return to New York. When at last settled at home, Curtis took stock of his recollections, and wrote: "Already my life at the Farm is removed and transfigured. It stands for so much in my experience, and is so fairly rounded, that I know the experience could never return, tho' the residence might be renewed. When we mend the broken chain, we see ever after the point of union." Some months later, still writing to Dwight, he says: "The Arcadian beauty of the place is lost to me, and would have been lost, had there been no change. Seen from this city life, you cannot think how fair it seems. So calm a congregation of devoted men and true women performing their perpetual service to the Idea of their lives, and clothed always in white garments. . . . The effect of a residence at the Farm, I imagine, was not a greater willingness to service in the kitchen, and to particularly assert that labor was divine, but

discontent that there was such a place as a kitchen." He had clearly learned that getting away from the disagreeable realities of life was not dealing with them in the most serviceable spirit, that, as Goethe says, character is developed only by plunging into the stream of human activity.

Whether he had in mind that particular dictum of the German poet is uncertain, but he was reading a good deal of German at the time, and these letters make particular mention of Goethe, who puzzled but impressed him, and whose leaven was clearly working in him. Other reading referred to includes numerous old English poets and dramatists, Bunyan, Montaigne, Amadis de Gaul, St. Augustine, and the "Elements of Agricultural Chemistry." But the principal preoccupation of these letters is, naturally enough, with musical matters, for he was writing to a musician, and was himself deeply interested in the subject. It was a good season for music in New York; Ole Bull and Vieuxtemps were making their first American appearances, and the Philharmonic Society was giving concerts, one of which he describes as "certainly the finest concert ever given in the country." What music meant to him, then and ever afterwards, may be seen from these words: "Why do I love music enough to be only a lover, and cannot offer it a life-devoted service? Yet the lover serves in his sort, and if I may not minister to it, it

cannot fail to dignify and ennoble my life." The early stirrings of Curtis's literary ambition were prompted by the art which he thus loved, and an essay on "Music and Ole Bull," published in W. H. Channing's paper, "The Present," marked his first appearance in print. There is not much about the Norwegian violinist in this fledgling composition, but there is a sound feeling for the spiritual significance of the tonal art.

In the spring of 1844, the brothers went to live at Concord "for the better furtherance of our main and original end,—the desire to unite in our own persons the freedom of a country life with moderate outdoor manual occupation, and with intellectual cultivation and pursuits." These are the words of Burrill Curtis, but they accurately express the feelings of his brother as well. The writer goes on to outline the new course of life: "At Concord we first took up our residence in the family of an elderly farmer, recommended by Mr. Emerson. We gave up half the day (except in hay time, when we gave the whole day) to sharing the farm work indiscriminately with the farm laborers. The rest of the day we devoted to other pursuits, or to social intercourse or correspondence; and we had a flat-bottomed rowing-boat built for us, in which we spent very many afternoons on the pretty little river. For our second season, we removed to another farm and farmer's house, nearer

Mr. Emerson and Walden Pond, where we occupied only a single room, making our own beds and living in the very simplest and most primitive style. A small piece of ground, which we hired of the farmer, we cultivated for ourselves, raising vegetables only and selling the superfluous produce, and distributing our time much as before." We may supply this outline with a realistic shading by quoting from a letter of George Curtis, descriptive of the busy season of the haying, "Then comes morning and wakefulness and boots and breakfast and scythes and heat and fatigue, and all my venerable Joshuas endeavor in vain to make oxen stand still, and I heartily wish them and I back in our valley ruling the heavens and not bending scythes over unseen hassocks which do sometimes bend the words of our mouths into shapes resembling oaths! those most crooked of all speech, but therefore best and fittest for the occasional crooks of life, particularly mowing. Yet I mow and sweat and get tired very heartily, for I want to drink this cup of farming to the bottom and taste not only the morning froth but the afternoon and evening strength of dregs and bitterness, if there be any."

It was during their second Concord season that the Curtises helped Thoreau build his famous cabin by Walden Pond. By this time they were on fairly intimate terms with the more famous Concordians, and even Hawthorne seems to have thawed a little

in George's sunny presence. In the autumn of 1845, a sort of club was suggested by Emerson, to take the form of Monday evening gatherings in his study. The club lived only three weeks, and Curtis, writing a few years later for "The Homes of American Authors," gave a gently humorous account of the first of its meetings, "The philosophers sat dignified and erect. There was a constrained but very amiable silence, which had the impertinence of a tacit inquiry, seeming to ask, 'Who will now proceed to say the finest thing that has ever been said?' It was quite involuntary and unavoidable, for the members lacked that fluent social genius without which a club is impossible. It was a congress of oracles on the one hand, and of curious listeners upon the other. I vaguely remember that the Orphic Alcott invaded the Sahara of silence with a solemn 'Saying,' to which, after due pause, the honorable member for Blackberry Pastures [Thoreau] responded by some keen and graphic observations, while the Olympian host, anxious that so much material should be spun into something, beamed smiling encouragement upon all parties. But the conversation became more and more staccato. Miles Coverdale [Hawthorne], a statue of night and silence, sat a little removed, under a portrait of Dante, gazing imperturably upon the group, and as he sat in the shadow, his dark hair and eyes and suit of sables made him, in that society,

the black thread of mystery which he weaves into his stories. . . . I remember little else but a grave eating of russet apples by the erect philosophers, and a solemn disappearance into night. . . . The club struggled on valiantly, discoursing celestially, eating apples, until the third evening it vanished altogether." But there was social converse of a more pliable sort than this to be had in Concord, and music, without which Curtis would have felt that life was deprived of its crowning grace, and long rambles afield, and altogether it must have been a pleasant season.

The letters written by Curtis to his father during this stay at Concord show that his serious attention was already given to public affairs. The social favorite, the amateur farmer, the dilettante musician, and the seeker after culture, did not make impossible the thoughtful observer of the perils that beset the nation, and the Curtis of later years is distinctly foreshadowed in what the youth of twenty had to say about the relations of North and South, and the hypocrisy of the protective tariff. On the one subject he writes: "It is most true that slavery will be abolished finally by the force of public opinion. But the North begins to groan already. While it recognizes the comity of nations and the solemn bond, it begins to speak of the separation with plain words. It may not be expedient just now, but then when will

it be? The old conviction that no law, no arrangement, no gain, can permit such direct participation as is provided by the Constitution, will at last distinctly demand some change, and, even if the demand be postponed an hundred years, the South will not be ready. What gains the South by separation? It will take Texas to its bosom and possibly conquer Mexico, but no state can endure the unalterable disapprobation of the world. It would yield to the heat of universal censure like wax. It becomes a very grave question to every man. In the event of a disunion, the North might enjoy less commerce and a thousand decreased political advantages, but, as unto an individual who sacrifices to justice, there would be no real loss, but an eternal gain."

That the young man saw the protective policy in its true light as a policy of selfish greed and national folly is evident from the following passages: "I have no right to protect American labor at the expense of foreign. What does it matter to me or to God whether Lowell or Manchester be ruined? Extend this into politics and it places us upon a wide, universal platform. It does not suffer any American feeling or British feeling. While I confess that the British laborers starve, I do not do very well to refuse to take what they make; I must pull down my restrictive laws. I must say to the whole world, 'He who makes the best cloth shall have the best pay.' Then

come English and all manner of foreign goods into the market and spoil our trade. But there is plainly but one way of paying for all imports, and that is by exports. Sugar and rice, potatoes and grain, must pay for all this, and there will be no more goods than I give an equivalent for. Then if there be not enough, let our own manufacturers turn to. Besides, commerce rests upon natural laws and not upon human will. If America is not a productive garden for some other land, no tariff will make her so. . . . Let us make a maxim in politics, that what is good for America is good for the other nations,—for all, because it is universal and unselfish. I have a right to wear fine linen, and use Paris handkerchiefs, if I choose to pay for them at their prices, and you have no right to make me buy yours by making theirs dearer—I see no necessity that American manufacturers should flourish if they cannot do so without thrusting our neighbor out of the market. I will have no fear that God has given us a land that cannot support itself against the world in the noblest, freest manner, or, if I see it cannot, I shall also see that it is no proper home."

Early in November, 1845, Curtis left Concord, returning for the winter to his father's New York house. It was a winter of enjoyment and growth. He heard a great deal of music, and continued his studies in literature, plunging deep into German,

French, and Italian, in anticipation of the European travels already projected. In June, 1846, he laid his plan for a two years' journey before his father, suggesting that a letter of credit for ten thousand francs would be acceptable, "not that I shall expect to spend that sum in two years, but because it is well to have a generous background to our picture." It seems a modest request, and was willingly acceded to. Before leaving his native country, he gave a few weeks of the early summer to a last view of Concord, and a round of leave takings from his friends. He sailed early in August, on a packet from New York to Marseilles—a forty-six days' voyage—and did not return for four years.

II

It is a wonderful thing for a young American of twenty-two to see Europe for the first time, and Curtis was by nature as well as by training peculiarly susceptible to the impressions of foreign travel. His first winter was spent in Rome, and in the spring, after a sojourn in Naples and vicinity, he went northward to Florence, Genoa, Milan, and Venice, on the way to Germany. He kept a diary, from which his biographer makes a few extracts, and also wrote a series of letters to two New York newspapers, the "Courier and Inquirer" and the "Tribune," which Mr. Cary has also unearthed, and describes as

"clear, straightforward reporting of the highest sort." Here is an expression, transmitted to Dwight, of that first European winter in Rome. "But it is the relics of the summer prime of the Rome of distant scholars and lovers, and the art which shines with an Indian-summer softness in the autumn of its decay, that rule here yet; for the imperial days have breathed a spirit into the air which broods over the city still. Although it is a modern capital, with noise and dirt and smells and nobility and fashionable drives, and walks and shops, and the red splendor of lacquered cardinals, and the triple-crowned Pope, in the arches which rise over modern chapels and of which they are built, in the ruined forum and aqueducts and baths and walls, are the decayed features of what was once greatest in this world, and which rules it from its grave." A bit sophomorical, perhaps, but interesting and graceful, as is also this companion bit of description penned in Naples. "Two or three old castles stand out upon the bay from the city, picturesque objects for artists and lookers on, and in the hazy moonlight black and sharp masses reflected in the water. Sails and steamers and boats of all sorts are constantly dotting this space, and I am never weary of wandering along the shore on which lie the fishermen among their boats, with mournful looking women and black, matted-haired, gypsy-like children."

The American tourist with a chip on his shoulder was even then abroad, although less plentifully than in our later years, and Curtis occasionally ran foul of him, an experience which provoked this comment: "I have been quite unsphered since I have been here, in various ways, and have discovered how good every man's business is and how wide his horizon. There is a shabby Americanism which prowls proselyting through Europe, defying its spirit or its beauty or its difference to swerve it from what it calls its patriotism. Because America is contented and tolerably peaceful with a Republic, it prophesies that Europe shall see no happy days until all kings are prostrated, and belches that peculiar eloquence which prevails in small debating-clubs in retired villages at home. . . . We fancy a thousand things fine at home because we do not know how much finer the same may be, perhaps because we do not know that they are copies. Indeed, I feel as if it would be a good fruit of long travel to recover the knowledge of the fact which we so early lose—that we are born into the world with relations to men as men before we are citizens of a country with limited duties. A noble cosmopolitanism is the brightest jewel in a man's crown."

After his year in Italy, Curtis worked northward, by way of Switzerland to Germany, and settled in Berlin for his second winter. The spring and sum-

mer of 1848 were given to various journeyings—in the Saxon Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, the Rhine country, and the Alps once more—until he brought up in Paris for his third winter. It must be remembered that this was the great year of Revolution, and he was in the thick of the turmoil in several countries. But he seems to have contemplated this tremendous political movement without being carried away by its passion; he was sympathetic, but remained calm of mind and judicial in poise. He was still the seeker after culture rather than the soldier in the war of liberation. Ten years later, when he felt the sharper impact of political forces in his own country, he was to become as stout a fighter for freedom and justice as anyone could wish him to be, but that is another story. A long term of spiritual development was needed to transform the gentle dilettante of the 'forties into the earnest civic champion of the 'fifties Curtis spent his fourth winter in Syria and on the Nile—the only part of his four *Wanderjahre* to bear distinctive literary fruit—and returned to America in 1850, definitely resolved to take up letters as a career.

At this mid-century time, American literature was in a condition of vigorous growth, and its outlook was full of promise: most of the writers who contribute to the glory of our golden age had already become conspicuous in the public gaze. But if we wish to place ourselves at the viewpoint of 1850, we

must keep constantly in mind two facts: first, that our literature was young, and, second, that its greatest names meant much less than they have come to mean now that the literary epoch which they created has been almost completely merged with the past. When Curtis wrote his first book, Poe had just died and Cooper was closing his career, but Irving, the dean of our literature, was living at Sunnyside with considerable work yet before him, and Bryant, our veteran poet, was not much past a ripe middle age. As for Curtis's contemporaries, their reputations were still in the process of making. Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, and Holmes were his seniors by from fifteen to twenty years, but were hardly yet established in the affections of the public. Lowell, Whitman, Taylor, and Stedman were young men of about his own age, and only the first of the four had made an appearance in print. The field was fairly free to all comers, and the horizon was unbounded.

In a letter to Dwight, dated March 17, 1851, in which Curtis makes excuses for having allowed his correspondence to lapse, he says: "May I also add the satiety of writing, which a man who has just published a book may be supposed to be experiencing. For I *have* published a book, a copy of which, with the heart of the author, pressed but not *dried* between the blank leaves, you should have had immediately

but for my absence from New York. It is called 'Nile Notes of a Howadji,' and has thus far, being only a week old, received as flattering notice as any tremulous young author could have wished." The "tremulous young author" was just twenty-seven years old. The next month, he says of his book: "The Nile Notes I cannot hesitate to call successful, but not a great hit." The sale of twenty-five hundred copies within the first six months certainly justifies the modest claim. The book was favorably reviewed by the critics, and elicited praise from such men as Hawthorne and Whipple. An English edition was published with title changed to "Nile Notes of a Traveler," and an honorarium of five guineas was paid to the author. In England, also, the book was cordially received, and commended by such writers as Leigh Hunt, and in such journals as "The Spectator" and "The Athenæum."

There was, however, a fly in the ointment of all this praise. Certain passages descriptive of the dancing girls in Egypt were too vividly sensuous for the prudish taste of some of his American readers, and gave offense. That the author's purpose was pure and his intention legitimately artistic is beyond any question, but he appealed to a public bred in the puritan tradition, which affected to ignore the sensual side of life, and he found to his surprise and indignation that the descriptions in question were in some

quarters held to be reprehensible. He was not a little concerned to learn that his own father disapproved of this aspect of the book, and wrote to him with manly frankness in its defense. "When I was in Egypt I felt that the picture of impressions there had never been painted. Travelers have been either theorists and philosophers or young men with more money than brains, or professional travelers. In no book of any of them was the essentially *sensuous*, luxurious, languid and sense-satisfied spirit of Eastern life as it appears to the traveler represented. Here and in every newspaper notice (some dozen) that I have seen I find that I have achieved that success, and I find the same thing in all this outcry of immorality or indecency, or whatever it is, and which comes from New York alone. . . . The moral sense of New York is in general so vitiated that I care for it in general no more than for such particular condemnations. My only sorrow is that you should unnecessarily condemn the book, and I am sorry, because it ought not to be condemned! The dancing girls occupy no more space in the book than they occupied in the voyage, and they must always occupy a large space because they are the life and the most characteristically Eastern life of the river. . . . Had I written a book to please you, I would not have published it because it would not have pleased myself; and while I confess certain expressions are too broad

and might well be altered, the essential spirit of the book is precisely what I wish it. I would not have it toned down, for I toned it up intentionally. My objections are not moral but literary." In our own day, we have departed so far from those old-time notions of literary reticence that it is difficult to take seriously the strictures upon the "Nile Notes" that evoked this temperately indignant letter.

In 1852, a second volume of *impressions de voyage*, "The Howadji in Syria," followed up the success of the first, and Curtis was fairly launched as an author. In both these books he cultivated a fantastic and artificial style, and adopted an irresponsible pose that must have surprised, and possibly disheartened, his earnest associates of the Brook Farm and Concord days. Both the style and the pose were abandoned when they had served their purpose, but the two books preserve for us a portrait of the young Curtis which we need to supplement the portrait of sterner lineaments that we figure in later years from the utterances of the publicist. It is the subjective interest of the books that has kept them alive, rather than their descriptions of the Oriental scene or their discussions of questions that no longer exist. One project of a serious nature, suggested by his Egyptian journeyings, he entertained for several years. This was a biography of Mehemet Ali, to whose picturesque career he had

given one of the chapters of "The Howadji in Syria." But the plan was abandoned because he came to realize that the impelling motive was "the desire to do something which, by the orthodox and received standard, should be conceded to be a graver work than anything I have done," and this motive, he concluded, did not seem adequate to justify an undertaking so distinctly outside of his natural scope.

III

The year which was marked by the publication of Curtis's first book was also the year of his first platform appearance, and of his initiation into the "grind" of journalism. He was lecturing in Providence in February, 1851, and in April joined Horace Greeley's staff on the New York "Tribune." For some three months he did odd jobs for the paper, writing criticisms of music and art, reading manuscript and exchanges, and occasionally venturing a leader. He was urged to buy an interest in the "Tribune" and identify himself with its interests, but declined, shrinking from "the utter slavery of such a life." Instead, he obtained a roving commission from the paper to make a round of visits to the summer resorts, and write a series of letters about them. This was much to his taste, and we find him saying in July, "Soon I shall spread sheeny vans for flight—Niagara, Sharon, Berkshire, Nahant, New-

port, and general bliss *ad infinitum*." The letters resulting from this outing were collected to make "Lotus Eating," his third book, published in 1852.

To all outward seeming, Curtis was during these years a votary of pleasure in its refined and artistic sense, although he accepted a considerable amount of laborious taskwork. His personal appearance is described by William Winter, who met him at about this time at Longfellow's house in Cambridge. "He was a young man, lithe, slender, faultlessly apparelled, very handsome, who rose at my approach, turning upon me a countenance that beamed with kindness and a smile that was a welcome from the heart. His complexion was fair. His hair was brown, long, and waving. His features were regular and of exquisite refinement. His eyes were blue. His bearing was that of manly freedom and unconventional grace, and yet it was that of absolute dignity. He had the manner of the natural aristocrat—a manner that is born, not made; a manner that is never found except in persons who are self-centered without being selfish; who are intrinsically noble, wholly simple and wholly true." This description is strikingly like that made by Ruskin of Charles Eliot Norton when they first met on a Lake Geneva steamer, and it is pleasant to think in these terms of the two young men who were afterwards to be so closely linked in friendship and in devotion to the highest ideals of American citizenship.

That these ideals were already taking shape in Curtis's thought is apparent from a letter of 1851, commenting upon a recent judicial pronouncement upon the question of fugitive slaves. "The very oath by which we bind ourselves, as officers of the human law, is the direct recognition of a higher and more solemn obligation, and the point where the citizen merges in the man he did not consider, apparently, a point for his notice; yet that is the essential point of the difficulty. Nobody denies the obligations of the law, but laws may be irretrievably bad, as in the case of the Roman Emperors, as now in Italy under Austrian rule, and by no obligation is a man bound to regard them. In fact, this pro-fugitive slave law movement and the doctrine of law at all hazards is, in politics, the same damnation that the infallibility of the Romish Church is in religion, and wherever, as with us, the tendency of the times is to individual and private judgment, the cause of the wrong is just as much lost in politics as it is in religion." Thus we do discern in embryo our grave and serious Curtis of the later years when lotus-eating was no more, and the call to arms no longer fell unheeded upon his ears. His awakening to responsibility was a little retarded both by his temperament and by the easy conditions of his existence, but when the awakening came it was final and complete.

Curtis's three books had been published by the

Harpers, and this fact naturally brought him into relations with the house, and with "Harper's Magazine," which began to appear in the year of his return from abroad. It was not until 1854 that he assumed charge of the Easy Chair, but before that time he had been a frequent contributor to the Harper periodicals. More important for the history of these early years was his connection with "Putnam's Magazine," which was started in 1853, with Charles F. Briggs (Harry Franco) as chief, and Curtis and Parke Godwin as associates. It was in this magazine that "The Potiphar Papers" and "Prue and I" were published, and speaking of them, and of the writer's other editorial labors, Mr. Godwin says: "It was evidence of the fecundity and versatility of Mr. Curtis's gifts that while he was thus carrying forward two distinct lines of invention—the one full of broad comic effects, and the other of exquisite ideals—he was contributing to the entertainment of our public in a half dozen other different modes," writing criticisms of music and the drama, reviews of such new books as "Hiawatha," "Bleak House," the Brontë novels, and the poems of Arnold, Browning and Tennyson, songs, short stories, sketches of travel, and miniature essays upon social subjects.

The following is Mr. Godwin's account of the genesis of "The Potiphar Papers." "It was while providing entertainment for our readers in a second

number that the vivacious Harry Franco exclaimed, 'I have it! Let us, each of us, write an article on the state of parties. You, Howadji, who hung a little candle in the naughty world of fashion, will show it up in their light; you, Pathfinder, who consort with scurvy politicians, will say of it what they think; while I will discuss it in some way of my own'—which he never did. But Mr. Curtis and the other person were moved by the hint, and the former at once wrote a paper on the state of parties, which he called 'Our Best Society.' It was a severe criticism of the follies, foibles, and affectations of those circles which got their guests, as they did their edibles and carriages, from Brown, sexton and caterer, and which thought unlimited supplies of terrapin and champagne the test and summit of hospitality. Trenchant as it was, it was yet received with applause. Some thought the name of the leading lady more suggestive than facts warranted, and that in such phrases as 'rampant vulgarity in Brussels lace,' 'the orgies of rotten Corinth,' and 'the frenzied festivals of Rome in her decadence,' the brush was overloaded. None the less, the satire delighted the public, and was soon followed by other papers in the same vein." These were "The Potiphar Papers," collected and published later in the year as the author's fourth book. They took the town as nothing of the sort had taken it since the youthful disportings

of Irving and his friends; they were clearly in the vein of Thackeray, but of a Thackeray less bitter and more fanciful, lacking in creative power, but faithfully reproductive of the superficial aspects of a society based upon wealth which had been rapidly gotten, and which its possessors had not learned to use gracefully. That they sowed the seed of a better growth is the opinion of Mr. Cary, who says: 'Many a young man, reading the papers from month to month, found erected between him and the temptation of a frivolous and essentially low life the light but not easily disregarded barrier of the scorn of a guide who was at once a moralist, a philosopher, and an accomplished gentleman."

"Prue and I," written for "Putnam's" in 1855, and published the year following, was a book of very different character. It is a small book, made up of half a dozen magazine articles, flowingly improvised, and its main conception, to use Mr. Godwin's words, is "the steeping of the palpable and familiar in the glorious dyes of the ideal, which children's fables, folk-lore, Middle Age legends, and great poets have done for us time out of mind." When we received one of these papers, he goes on to say, "we chirruped over it, as if by some strange merit of our own we had entrapped a sunbeam. We followed the lines so intently, with such various exclamations of pleasure, that a stranger coming in might have sus-

pected both of us to belong to that wonderful company of eccentrics which the old scrivener summoned from the misty realms of tradition—the Wandering Jew; the priests of Prester John; the alchemists who sought to turn base metals into gold; the hunters of El Dorado, of Enchanted Islands, of the Fountain of Perpetual Youth; the makers of Utopias ever looming up and ever vanishing; even our own Captain Symmes, who sails through his hole into the interior of the earth, where its jewels and precious metals are forged; and that famous friend of our childhood, the Baron Munchausen, whose signal claim to a place in a fictitious world was that he was the one most replenished liar out of all the thousand millions of humans—and brought them all together on the deck of the Flying Dutchman, to sail forever through foggy seas, onward, onward to unknown shores." In its essence, this series of fantastic pictures and situations, strung like beads upon a thin thread of every-day life and character,—embodies the philosophy of the contented mind, refined above sordid desires and material satisfactions, rich in the estates of the imagination, knowing full well the darkness of the depths into which the soul may fall, and soaring serenely above them into that ether, "higher than the sphery chime," where virtue sits securely enthroned. Considered as pure literature, it is probably the best book that Curtis ever wrote,

and its charm is of the kind that does not easily fade. In point of style, also, it leaves the artificialities of the "Howadji" manner far behind, and almost reaches the full maturity of the later Easy Chair essays and the great orations.

IV

It was in 1854 that Curtis succeeded Donald G. Mitchell in the occupancy of the Easy Chair, which lasted for the thirty-eight remaining years of his life, and made him our American Addison—our typical essayist in the eighteenth-century meaning of the term. It would be difficult to show that the essays of the Easy Chair are inferior in literary quality to those of the "Spectator," and not at all difficult to maintain that they are broader in their range of interest, and richer in human sympathy: with respect to mere quantity, they greatly outweigh the Addisonian product. When a man writes several short essays a month for nearly two score years, the total becomes impressive; Mr. Winter gives twenty-five hundred as the approximate number. They dealt with most sorts of subjects, with worthies ancient and modern, with early impressions and striking contemporary figures and situations, with poets and novelists and orators and actors and musicians, with every aspect of the social comedy as viewed by the most genial of spectators, with all matters that

seemed to lend themselves to his purpose of unobtrusive didacticism—a purpose so veiled by animated and fanciful discourse that the reader was hardly conscious of its existence. It is not often that a novelist has commanded such an audience as was his, or held it for so many years by the persuasive power of eloquence. It has been observed that the contentious questions of current politics were kept outside the Easy Chair's range of vision; its occupant felt that the platform was his proper place for their discussion, and that a heavier equipment than playful satire was required for an effective assault upon the hosts of political corruption. Three small volumes of essays were made up from the Easy Chair series at about the time of the author's death (1891–1894); several more volumes of equally lasting value might easily be gathered together from the same source of supply.

Almost from the time of his return from Europe, Curtis had taken up the business of lecturing, and was so successful as a platform speaker that engagements came to him in constantly increasing numbers. In these early years he probably earned more by speaking than by writing; this seems to be a fair inference from a letter of 1854, in which he says: "I mean to lecture during two months and make two thousand dollars. I have put my price up to fifty dollars." Mr. Godwin says, still writing of the

early days of "Putnam's": "Then, ever and anon, Mr. Curtis would be off for a week or two, delivering lectures on 'Sir Philip Sidney,' on 'The Genius of Dickens,' on 'The Position of Women,' and in one case a course of lectures in Boston and in New York on 'Contemporary Fiction.' In a galaxy of lecturers which included Emerson, Phillips, Beecher, Chapin, Henry Giles, and others, he was a bright particular star, and everywhere a favorite." He even found his way to the West as early as 1853, and in December of that year wrote to Briggs: "I have seen a prairie, I have darted all day across a prairie, I have been near the Mississippi, I have been invited to Iowa, which lies somewhere over the western horizon. I feel as all the people feel in novels,—I confess the West! Great it is and greatly to be praised." As for Detroit, that city "has drifted into the East," he says. The discovery that the United States is not bounded by the Alleghanies has been made by numerous later explorers, but Curtis was one of the first to announce it.

A month later, we find him lecturing in Boston, and humorously describing himself as "a being who nightly vomits fire and ribbons for the satisfaction of gaping multitudes, who is taken to balls, and rushes into small fishing towns to fascinate the alewives—who betakes himself with his rush-light to illuminate small villages whereunto gas has never

been previously brought." Later in the year he foregathered with Longfellow and Lowell in Cambridge, incidentally preparing an article on Craigie House for the "Homes of American Authors." Then came three or four summer and fall months at Newport, "my country, where my airiest castles are built and my fairest estates lie." The following extracts are from letters written to Briggs from Newport. "My young friend Curtis is here, immensely tickled to see his sentimental phiz in Putnam, and struggling with a poem! All the fools are not dead yet, it seems. But I, who have lived a lie for thirty years,—I, whose life was a riper romance than the most imaginative of these idiots can invent,—must laugh at that simple ass, Curtis, 'who is actually screwing out a poem in the regular old heroic style.'" "Time goes I know not where, I care not how. Upon cool morning piazzas I sit talking with the Muses, in warm evening parlors I rush dancing with the Graces. There are no end of pretty women. At the Bellevue dance on Monday I saw more really lovely girls than often fall to the lot of anybody's less than a sultan's eyes." "I am going to church, because I shall hear a man of earnest and solemn feeling chant a kind of religious reverie which his congregation loves, but I am sure do not understand. The people also, look calm and pious, there is not too strong a sense of millinery."

One of these passages contains the suggestion that Curtis sometimes indulged in verse-making. We are not apt to think of him as a poet, but he wrote a good deal of verse in his earlier years, was occasionally the poet of a college commencement, and once went so far as to propose to Dwight that they join company in a volume of poetry. The examples that have been preserved reveal a vein of delicate sentiment, simply and sincerely expressed in terms obviously imitative of old-fashioned models.

"Sing the song that once you sung,
When we were together young,
When there were but you and I
Underneath the summer sky.

"Sing the song, and o'er and o'er—
But I know that nevermore
Will it be that song you sung
When we were together young."

An acceptable minor strain, but we cannot regret that he devoted his talents to the tasks of prose for which they were much better fitted.

At the time of an earlier visit to Newport in 1852, Curtis became engaged to be married, and announced the fact in a rapturous letter to Dwight. But this arrangement came to naught, and it was not until three years later that he made the engagement that resulted in the happiest of unions. The young woman

in question was Miss Anna Shaw, of Staten Island, whose brother was Robert Gould Shaw, who died leading his negro soldiers in the charge at Fort Wagner, and whose sister was Josephine Shaw, who became the wife of Charles Russell Lowell, and, after her husband's death at Cedar Creek, gave her many remaining years to helpful philanthropic endeavor. The Shaws had been friends of Curtis in the Brook Farm days; they were not members of the community, but they had lived near by, and the children had played and studied there. The wedding took place on Thanksgiving Day, 1856, and among the guests was John C. Frémont, defeated just before in the Presidential campaign, whose candidacy Curtis had stoutly championed, and whose defeat was but the presage of imminent victory for the cause of human freedom.

The year of his happiness had also brought to Curtis his first great grief. His father died early in 1856. How the son felt toward him may be seen from a letter to his mother written soon afterward. "You may imagine how strange and sad it is not to feel father's interest and anxiety in my success. I used to read everything that was said about me with his eyes, and so gladly sent him all the praise. . . . How just and calm and generous a friend my father was to me! He was so candid and simple in his love that I never ceased to feel myself a boy when I was

with him." Another occurrence of the same year was destined to have important consequences in Curtis's life. The ownership of "Putnam's" passed into new hands, and Curtis became a partner in the publishing firm, which soon thereafter failed. He not only lost all his investment, but assumed a heavy indebtedness that could not legally have been fixed upon him. He unflinchingly set to work to discharge the obligation, and lived with strict economy until the last dollar was paid. It was a task of sixteen years; they should have been the best years of his life, and perhaps they were, for all their privations and sacrifices, since they put to one of the severest of tests a character that could rise to meet it, and gave to the world an example of honorable dealing that may have been more fruitful than any eloquence of spoken or written word.

V

This year 1856, if any may be so considered, was the turning-point in Curtis's life. He was thirty-two years old; he had an established social position, and a wide reputation as journalist, lecturer, and author. He had experienced the ministry of sorrow, and was about to be tempered by an unexpected responsibility. He had, moreover, become associated by his marriage with a family that was already marked by its interest in the public welfare and its devotion

to high impersonal aims. This new atmosphere of strenuous idealism acted as a tonic influence upon his character, and aroused him to the full consciousness of his powers. His dreams became tinged with prophetic coloring, and his utterance, losing nothing of its suavity and charm, became informed with a new note of virility. Forsaking the paths of dalliance, like the youth of the "Songs before Sunrise,"

> "Then he stood up, and trod to dust
> Fear and desire, mistrust and trust,
> And dreams of bitter sleep and sweet,
> And bound for sandals on his feet
> Knowledge and patience of what must
> And what things may be, in the heat
> And cold of years that rot and rust
> And alter; and his spirit's meat
> Was freedom, and his staff was wrought
> Of strength, and his cloak woven of thought."

Of the influence of the Shaws in working this regeneration, Mr. Cary says: "The father and mother of the woman who was to be his wife were of the early school of intensely earnest, unflinching, uncompromising, unwearying foes of slavery. It was a part of their religion to fight the evil at all times and in all ways that offered or could be found, and it is certain that, if the flame of his zeal was not kindled, it was nursed and fanned by theirs."

Curtis had returned from Europe in the year of the Compromise which it was fatuously hoped would

concile all antagonisms, and remove the question slavery from national politics. Clay and Webster d joined in its acceptance, and under their leader- ip, men of both sections were crying "Peace!" nen it was perfectly clear to the moral vision that ere could be no peace. For no sooner did the terms the Compromise go into effect than the galling ture of its fugitive-slave provision became evident, d indignation flamed anew. We have already seen nat Curtis thought of that even in his days of lotus- ting. Then, in 1854, arose the vicious doctrine of pular sovereignty, and the successful attempt to en the Kansas-Nebraska territory to slavery under e protection of that specious plea. Then came the stardly assault upon Sumner in the Senate chamber, d then the long agony of "bleeding Kansas." ne slavery power was now showing its hand, and Curtis the psychological crisis had arrived. It s a new-born Curtis who on August 5, 1856, stood the platform of Wesleyan University and addressed student audience, in words that were heard far yond those walls, on "The Duty of the American holar to Politics and the Times." This was no eum performance, but a trumpet-call to action, d many a generous soul responded to its appeal. A few characteristic passages of this address may given. A young man speaking to young men, rtis at once placed himself in touch with his hear-

ers. "Too young to be your guide and philosophe
I am yet old enough to be your friend. Too little
advance of you in the great battle of life to teach yo
from experience, I am yet old enough to share wi
you the profit of the experience of other men and
history. . . . I would gladly speak to you of th
charms of pure scholarship; of the dignity and wor
of the scholar; of the abstract relation of the schol
to the state. The sweet air we breathe and the repo
of midsummer invite a calm ethical or intellectu
discourse. But would you have counted him a frien
of Greece who quietly discussed the abstract natu
of patriotism on that Greek summer day throug
whose hopeless and immortal hours Leonidas an
his three hundred stood at Thermopylæ for liberty
And to-day, as the scholar meditates that deed, th
air that steals in at his window darkens his study an
suffocates him as he reads. Drifting across a cont
nent, and blighting the harvests that gild it wi
plenty from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, a blac
cloud obscures the page that records an old crim
and compels him to know that freedom always ha
its Thermopylæ, and that his Thermopylæ is calle
Kansas. . . . There has been but one great cau
in human affairs—the cause of liberty. In a thousan
forms, under a thousand names, the old contest ha
been waged. It divided the politics of Greece an
Rome, of England, France, America, into two partie

o that the history of liberty is the history of the vorld." The substance of the oration is a review of he strengthening of the slave power, beginning with ts intrenchments in the Constitution, and ending vith an account of "the Kansas iniquity." Then, voking memories of the Revolutionary heroes, the peaker made a sharp application of this lesson to he burning question of the present. "And yet no ictim of those days, sleeping under the green sod of Connecticut, is more truly a martyr of liberty than very murdered man whose bones lie bleaching in his summer sun upon the silent plains of Kansas." By these steps we approach the peroration. "The oice of our brothers who are bleeding, no less than f our fathers who bled, summons us to this battle. hall the children of unborn generations, clustering ver that vast western empire, rise up and call us lessed or cursed? Here are our Marathon and exington; here are our heroic fields. The hearts of ll good men beat with us. The fight is fierce—the sue is with God. But God is good." The speech us summarized found a wide circulation through he New York "Tribune" and in pamphlet form. helped, says C. E. Norton, "to define the political leals, and confirm the political principles of the ducated youth of the land."

In the fall of 1856, the new Republican party had ompleted its national organization, and entered the

field with John C. Frémont for its presidential candi
date, and a large body of aspirants for Congress and
for the offices of the state governments in the North
Curtis took an active part in the campaign, making
many speeches for the Republican cause in Penn
sylvania (then an October state), and afterward in
Connecticut and New York. He hardly expected
success in the election of that year, but was highly
hopeful for the future. Writing to a friend in the
lull between campaign and election, he said, "The
election is but an event. God is still God, however
the election goes and whoever is elected. The move
ment which is now fairly begun will not relapse into
apathy or death."

The next four years were devoted mainly to lectur
ing and political activity. Curtis made his home
with the Shaws, on Staten Island, and there his first
child, a son, was born in December, 1857. But he
knew less than most men of the joys of home during
these busy years, for his duties called him elsewhere
for a considerable part of the time. He worked hard
for the Republicans in the campaign of 1858, and
when it was over, and their governor was elected in
New York, he started on a lecture tour, for which no
less than sixty evenings were engaged. In the sum
mer of 1857, he had followed his first great oration by
a second, on "Patriotism," in which he had reaffirmed
his belief that it was the duty of every good citizen

to disobey the fugitive slave law. "If the law of the land, enacted by the majority, declares that you must murder your child under two years of age, or prostitute your daughter, or deny a cup of water to the thirsty, or return to savage Indians an innocent captive flying for his life whom they had stolen from his country and enslaved for their own gain, under the name of civilizing him, you have no right to obey, because such laws nullify themselves, being repulsive to the holiest human instincts, and obedience would produce a more disastrous public demoralization than any possible revolution could breed."

The two orations thus far mentioned were delivered under peaceful academic auspices, before educational institutions. The third, a public address of 1859, given in Brooklyn and Boston, and afterwards in Philadelphia, had a more dramatic setting. It was upon "The Present Aspect of the Slavery Question," and was delivered at the time when John Brown's trial and execution had so inflamed the public mind that sober judgment was impossible. In Brooklyn and Boston the address found audiences in general sympathy with the speaker, but the case was different in the City of Brotherly Love. The pro-slavery sentiment was very strong in that community, which owed much of its prosperity to trade with the South, and the opening of a fair on December 12 by the Philadelphia Female Antislavery Society was regarded

as a highly offensive proceeding. Curtis's lecture (which had been arranged for several months before) was appointed for the 15th, and a determined effort was made to prevent its being given. On the morning of that day, one of the leading newspapers published a call, signed "Many Citizens," urging an evening rally in front of the lecture hall, of "all who are determined that no more hireling incendiaries shall be permitted to make their inflammatory addresses in our loyal city." The hall in question was the upper part of a building of which the lower story was used as a warehouse, into which freight cars were run for unloading.

Curtis had the support of the local authorities, although neither mayor nor chief of police shared his opinions, and the hall was well guarded by officers. He came to the place of meeting accompanied by a body-guard of men and women well known for their antislavery sympathies, and went up to the platform, the approaches to which were forthwith blocked by piles of benches. A policeman sat at the end of every seat in the hall, and several hundred were stationed downstairs. Curtis was introduced, and rioting began at once. Those within attempted to storm the stage, and the mob without threw stones and bottles of vitriol through the windows. There was a fierce struggle in the warehouse below, and the chief of police, finding his prisoners too numerous to

be sent away to the station, had them locked up in the empty cars standing in the building. Then followed attempts to set fire to the hall, whereupon the chief announced that in case the building should be burned, the audience would be taken care of, but no particular effort made to save the carloads of imprisoned rioters. Meanwhile Curtis, availing himself of occasional intervals of comparative quiet, went on with his address to the end. "When I could hear him," reports one of those present, "his voice was firm and clear and resonant, and his delivery sustained and self-possessed." Thus was the right of free speech maintained in Philadelphia, and thus did Curtis experience his "baptism of fire" in the sacred cause to which he had given himself. By way of anticlimax, it should be recorded that a year later, when he was engaged for a purely literary address in the same city, the mayor and the owner of the hall refused to allow him to appear. "It seems that I am such a dangerous fellow," he wrote, "that no hall owner in Philadelphia will risk the result of my explosive words, and not a place can be had for my fanatical and incendiary criticism of Thackeray."

One more excursion into literature proper was to be made before Curtis, following the example of his great prototype Milton, threw himself wholly into public affairs. In 1859, he was prevailed upon to write a novel for serial publication in "Harper's

Weekly." "Trumps" (published in book form in 1861) was the result, but the sixth and last book of the author must be described as relatively a failure. He knew what was good in fiction, but had not himself the novelist's creative power. In "Trumps" he remained an essayist, and was more obtrusively a moralist—a dispenser of rewards and punishments—than the canons of the art of fiction allow. The book was lacking in vitality and in dramatic action; what merits it possessed as a novel were but a pale reflection of the work of stronger writers.

As events shaped themselves for the political crisis of 1860, Curtis was all the time actively at work. He held important positions in the local Republican organizations, and was appointed a delegate to the National Convention at Chicago. He went as a supporter of Seward, whom he believed to be the logical candidate of his party, but when the gathering in the "Wigwam" was stampeded for Lincoln, he did not sulk in his tent, but acquiesced, although with misgivings, in the nomination, and flung himself eagerly into the campaign that followed. In making the platform of the Convention, he showed his independence by turning upon his associates in the New York delegation, and supporting, against the professional politicians, the more advanced doctrine of the antislavery leaders. Giddings had moved to make the immortal words of the preamble

to the Declaration of Independence a part of the platform, but the motion had been lost, and its maker had turned to leave the hall. It seemed to Curtis, as he afterwards said, "that the spirits of all the martyrs to freedom were marching out of the convention behind the venerable form of that indignant and outraged old man." The scene that followed when Curtis rose to renew the amendment that had just suffered defeat is thus described by an eye-witness: "Folding his arms, he calmly faced the uproarious mass and waited. The spectacle of a man who wouldn't be put down at length so far amused the delegates that they stopped to look at him. 'Gentlemen,' rang out that musical voice in tones of calm intensity, 'this is the convention of free speech, and I have been given the floor. I have only a few words to say to you, but I shall say them, if I stand here until tomorrow morning.' Again the tumult threatened the roof of the 'Wigwam,' and again the speaker waited. His pluck and the chairman's gavel soon gave him another chance. Skilfully changing the amendment to make it in order, he spoke as with a tongue of fire in its support, daring the representatives of the party of freedom, meeting on the borders of the free prairies in a hall dedicated to the advancement of liberty, to reject the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence affirming the equality and defining the rights of man. The speech fell like a spark

upon tinder, and the amendment was adopted with a shout of enthusiasm more unanimous and deafening than the yell with which it had been previously rejected." Thus it was that the platform of Lincoln was saved from the stain of a cowardly evasion of principle. Some two or three years afterward, lecturing on the same theme, he heard one of his auditors remark: "He is a very dangerous man, he puts it so plausibly!" Commenting upon the incident in a letter, he said: "An American says so of the doctrine of the Declaration! You see there is work before us."

VI

It need hardly be said in so many words that Curtis was a loyal supporter of the Union cause throughout the Civil War. He believed that it was possible (as the event proved) to save the Union and to end slavery, and the stoutness of his faith stands in favorable contrast with the half-heartedness or the imperfect vision of those who despaired of accomplishing both ends. After the ordinances of secession, whereby a group of the Southern states sought to resume the sovereignty which they had abdicated in making the constitutional compact, he still hoped for a solution of the difficulty without resort to arms, and applauded the temper of Seward's speech in the Senate (January, 1861), which advocated every

concession that was possible short of an abandonment of fundamental principle. "No government does wisely which, however lawful, moderate, honest, and constitutional, treats any popular complaint, however foolish, unnecessary, and unjustifiable, with haughty disdain." But compromise became out of the question after the eventful April days that saw the fall of Fort Sumter and the bloodshed of Northern men. He wrote to Norton: "I think of the Massachusetts boys dead. 'Send them home tenderly,' says your governor. Yes, 'tenderly, tenderly, but for every hair of their bright young heads brought low, God, by our right arms, shall enter into judgment with traitors!'"

Curtis was not without an eye for the mistakes made by the President in those trying times, but he did not join in the impatient demand for more vigorous action. "I believe with all my heart in the cause, and in Abe Lincoln. His message is the most truly American message ever delivered. Think upon what a millenial year we have fallen when the President of the United States declares officially that this government is founded upon the rights of man! Wonderfully acute, simple, sagacious, and of antique honesty! I can forgive the jokes and the big hands, and the inability to make bows." In March, 1862, he writes: "I have faith in the President's common sense and practical wisdom. His policy has been

to hold the border states. He has held them; now he takes his next step and invites emancipation. I think he has the instinct of the statesman,—the knowledge of how much is practicable without recoil. From the first he has steadily advanced, and there has been no protest against anything he has said or done." And in September, when the Emancipation Proclamation was announced: "Coming at this moment, when we were in the gravest peril from Northern treachery, the proclamation clears the air like a northwest wind. We know now exactly where we are. There are now none but slavery and anti-slavery men in the country. The fence is knocked over, and straddling is impossible."

Turning for a moment to glance at Curtis's private and domestic concerns, we note that his second child, a girl, was born just after the attack on Fort Sumter. His two younger brothers enlisted as soldiers, and one of them, Joseph Bridgham Curtis, who had won the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel at the age of twenty-six, was killed at the head of his men, December 12, 1862. The draft riots in New York, in July, 1863, brought Curtis a suggestion of personal peril. He was told of a projected raid upon his Staten Island house, for the purpose of capturing Horace Greeley and Wendell Phillips, whom rumor reported to be concealed there. "I took the babies out of bed and departed to an unsuspected neighbor's. On Wednes-

lay a dozen persons informed me and Mr. Shaw hat our houses were to be burned; and as there was no police or military force upon the island, and my nly defensive weapon was a large family umbrella, carried Anna and the two babies to James Sturgis's n Roxbury."

All this time Curtis was busy with tongue and pen, erving his country, and at the same time working o lessen the burden of the old debt. His most mportant address of this period was "The American Doctrine of Liberty," first given at Harvard as a Phi Beta Kappa oration, and repeated some forty imes during the next twelve months. "In every ree nation," he said, "the public safety and progress equire a double allegiance—to the form and to the pirit of the government. By forgetting the spirit f our own, we have imperilled both its form and its xistence." In 1863, he assumed the political editor- hip of "Harper's Weekly," then the most influential aper of its kind in the country. He had long written or the paper as "The Lounger," and had contributed o it his only novel. But his new work was of a very ifferent character, and was destined to shape public pinion in the right direction for many years to come, ince the connection now made was continued to the nd of his life, and was interpreted so seriously that he editorial page was always largely, and for a umber of years wholly, the work of his pen. In this

editorial capacity, he developed a new individual style, plainer than that which served him for other purposes. It was a persuasive style that kept the average person constantly in mind, that set forth its reasonings in the simplest manner, and was altogether free from the irritating assumption of superiority that is sometimes made to alienate the best-disposed of readers from the best of causes. Unlike Lowell and Godkin, who during the same years were working editorially for the same ends, he could be patient with stupidity, and so gently could

> "The Wrong expose
> As sometimes to make converts, never foes."

As the time approached for the presidential election of 1864, Curtis could not altogether escape the mood of despondency that prevailed during that critical year. The repulse of the invading Confederates at Gettysburg and the capture of Vicksburg the year before had made the Union triumph a foregone conclusion, but the conflict seemed despairingly long, and the administration had to contend with scheming politicians as well as with a foe in arms. Curtis was again a delegate to the Republican National Convention, and wrote the official letter notifying Lincoln of his renomination. Curtis was himself nominated for Congress in that year, and, although he did not expect to be elected (and was not), welcomed the

opportunity for campaigning, and spoke daily or oftener, for some six weeks, but more for Lincoln than for himself. When the election was over, he heaved a sigh of thanksgiving. He wrote to Norton: 'Let us thank God and the people for this crowning mercy. I did not know how my mind and heart were strained until I felt myself sinking in the great waters of the triumph. We knew it ought to be; we knew that, bad as we have been, we did not deserve to be put out like a mean candle in its own refuse; but it is never day until the dawn."

He speaks in this same letter of having "prepared a very small sermon upon Political Infidelity." This was given as a lecture in about fifty places during the closing months of the war. That "absolute freedom of speech is the test of political fidelity in a free government" was its text, and its substance was a searching examination of the American conscience, showing that the sufferings of the nation had been the inevitable outcome of its unwillingness to discuss the evil of slavery in open and untrammelled debate. "It is not the impracticability of popular principles, but the infidelity to them of educated men, which has plunged the country into war." But the end of the long agony was now at hand, an end whose exultation was to be so tragically sobered a few days later. How the death of Lincoln affected Curtis may be read in the pages of "Harper's Weekly," and still

more clearly in these solemn and touching words from his private correspondence. "Tonight, in the misty spring moonlight, as I think of the man we all loved and honored, laid quietly to rest upon the prairie, I feel that I cannot honor too much, or praise too highly, the people that he so truly represented, and which, like him, has been faithful to the end. So spotless he was, so patient, so tender,—it is a selfish sad delight to me now, as when I looked upon his coffin, that his patience had made me patient, and that I never doubted his heart, or head, or hand. At the only interview I ever had with him, he shook my hand paternally at parting, and said, 'Don't be troubled, I guess we shall get through.' We *have* got through, at least the fighting, and still I cannot believe it. Here upon the mantel are the portraits of the three boys who went out of this room, my brother, Theodore Winthrop, and Robbie Shaw. They are all dead—the brave darlings—and now I put the head of the dear Chief among them, I feel that every drop of my blood and thought of my mind and affection of my heart is consecrated to securing the work made holy and forever imperative by so untold a sacrifice."

What that silent vow of consecration meant to Curtis is revealed in every act of his life from that time on. Problems almost as grave as those of armed rebellion were yet to confront the nation, a fact which

none realized better than he, and he exhibited in handling them the old manful resolution and sincerity of disinterested purpose. The conflicts in which he henceforth engaged were no longer spectacular, but their issue was as vital to the national well-being as was the outcome of the war itself. The editorial page of "Harper's Weekly" remained the vantage-ground upon which he fought, but he frequently sallied forth into the forum, and took an active part in the councils of the men in whose hands lay the direction of affairs. As early as 1864 he had been elected a member of the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. This office seemed of little importance to him in the earlier years, but its consequence was afterwards greatly enlarged, and it gave him an opportunity for much useful and effective work toward the close of his life. It should be explained that in this case the term "University" is used in the French sense, and means, not a single institution of learning, but the entire state system of public education, over which the Regents exercise a general control.

In the later 'sixties, however, his more immediate concerns were with political matters. The Constitution of New York needed revision, and Curtis was chosen a delegate to the Convention called for that purpose. He accepted the call, although it meant nearly a year of additional hard work, and the sacri-

fice of a much-needed summer vacation. The Convention, held in 1867-1868, was an able body of men, and its work was very thoroughly done. Curtis stood, among other things, for a unification of educational authority, for the filling of more offices by appointment and fewer by election, for state control over the police system, for the sale of liquor as a legitimate business, and for woman suffrage. In support of the last-named cause he was particularly eloquent, and he made a stout fight for it, although it was foredoomed to defeat. In the same year (1867) he was asked to join in a trade for the election of a United States senator, and combine with another candidate against Conkling, but this he naturally refused with indignation. In 1869, he was nominated for the office of Secretary of State of New York. The honor was bestowed by acclamation, and it greatly moved him to receive "such a spontaneous summons from one of the best conventions we ever had, and whose platform was without evasion, and noble." But he felt that he must decline the offer in justice to both his family and himself. In 1870 he acted as chairman of the State Convention, hoping that he might do something to soften the factional differences that were just then demoralizing the Republican party. He was asked to stand for the governorship, and consented, to discover afterwards that he had been tricked, that his name had been

injected into the discussion for the sole purpose of defeating the candidacy of Horace Greeley. He was bitterly hurt at this treatment, and never again would he permit his name to be bandied about in a nominating convention.

During these years, the great problem of national politics had been that of the reconstruction of the states lately in rebellion. In the protracted dispute between Congress and the President, Curtis supported the authority of the former, and even approved of the attempt to remove Johnson from office by impeachment proceedings. But when those proceedings failed, and the vote for conviction fell just one senator short of the required two-thirds majority, Curtis warmly defended the little band of Republican senators who had voted according to the dictates of conscience, and not at the party behest. He wrote to a friend: "To say that a senator who thinks his oath means what it states and who acts accordingly is infamous, is not criticism; it is an effort to destroy liberty of thought and speech by terrorism. I think, as it happens, although I should have voted to convict, that the party is infinitely stronger and surer of success since the failure of impeachment. I feared a few weeks ago that we were to be saved by the folly of our foes. But I see now that we have the conscience as well as the ardor of youth." Not many Republicans could then share with him this tolerant spirit.

VII

In one important respect, he could not approve of the conduct of the Republican Senate in this crisis. The use of its constitutional authority to confirm presidential nominations for the purpose of thwarting or coercing the executive, seemed to Curtis a gross abuse of power, and the mischievous device known then and still known as "the courtesy of the Senate" was clearly seen by him to be a means of nullifying the appointing power as defined by the Constitution, and to offer the gravest menace to honest government. It was a new phase of that form of organized and even legalized corruption known as the spoils system which had even then been preying upon our civic vitality for forty years, and which was the monster to whose destruction Curtis was to give the largest share of his remaining energies. That abominable system of office-mongering had become firmly entrenched in our administrative procedure since the time when it was introduced by Andrew Jackson. Sophistries were piled mountain-high in its defense, and even the impudent claim of Americanism was made for a system that flouted the very idea of equal opportunity for all which was supposed to be the foundation of the American government. That we might learn to get along without it seemed the veriest counsel of perfection, and those who spoke

of dislodging it from its place of advantage were derided as visionaries by the whole body of practical politicians.

This was the evil with which Curtis now sought to cope.

> "Before the monstrous wrong he set him down—
> One man against a stone-walled city of sin."

He did not long remain alone, for some of the noblest spirits of the time rallied to the new crusade, but as long as he lived he was recognized and loyally supported as the leader of the reform. The first practical steps were taken during Grant's first term, the way having been in some measure prepared by the two elaborate reports that had been submitted to Congress in 1867–1868 by a committee headed by Thomas A. Jenckes. In 1871, the President was given by Congress certain very limited powers in the matter, and immediately appointed a Civil Service Commission of seven members, of which Curtis at once became chairman. The first report of the Commission was made December 18, 1871, was at once, together with the rules recommended, approved by the President, and sent to Congress with a special message. In April, 1872, a second report with additional rules, was made and put in force, and the reform was fairly inaugurated. But in the session of 1875–1876, Congress refused an appropriation

for the work, and the President, weakly yielding to the politicians, suspended the operation of the rules. Curtis, a year before, feeling that the usefulness of the Commission was for the present at an end, had sent in his resignation, and gone back to his work for "Harper's Weekly," on the whole not discouraged at what had been accomplished.

Toward the close of Grant's first term, his many acts of mistaken judgment, and the scandals that had become attached to his administration, led to the factional movement which in 1872 nominated Greeley as a Liberal Republican for the presidency. Curtis, although he recognized the evils that led to the revolt, could not support it, for he did not feel that its candidate was altogether to be trusted, and his faith in Grant's good intentions and personal honesty remained unshaken. History records the failure of the movement, Greeley's death, and Grant's decisive victory. Before the President's re-inauguration, Curtis's health had given way, and he was ordered to take a long rest. Writing March 12, 1873, he says: "I have put the last feather on my patient camel's back, and he is broken down. About four weeks ago I came home from a short, hard trip to the West, worn out and ill. For a week I fought a fever which threatened several bad things, but all the bad symptoms have left me except a pudding-head and general prostration. I lie on the couch most all day,

and am ordered to rest absolutely for six months. . . . I shall have to work much more moderately hereafter, and am profoundly mortified to have brought myself to this pause." In the fall his recovery was fairly complete, although he attempted no lecturing for that winter. In fact, he gave up lecturing as a routine business altogether, for he had at last discharged the old debt for which his lyceum engagements had chiefly been made, and his platform appearances henceforth were to be consecrated to special occasions and events of public significance.

The first of these greater orations was the eulogy upon Sumner, June 9, 1874, before the General Court of Massachusetts. The next year he gave the centennial oration at Concord. Among his more famous personal orations were those upon Burns, Wendell Phillips, Bryant, and Lowell. He spoke frequently during the series of centennial celebrations of Revolutionary events, which ended with the unveiling of the Washington statue in New York, in 1883, with Curtis as the orator of the occasion. Among his more famous orations may also be mentioned three upon "The Puritan Principle," given (1876, 1883, 1885) before the New England Society of New York City; "The Public Duty of Educated Men," at Union College; "The Leadership of Educated Men," at Brown University; and "The Spirit and Influence of the Higher Education," at Albany.

An account of Curtis's manner as a speaker may be quoted from William Winter's memorial tribute. "He began with the natural deference of unstudied courtesy—serene, propitiatory, irresistibly winning. He captured the eye and the ear upon the instant, and before he had been speaking for many minutes he captured the heart. There was not much action in his delivery,—there never was any artifice. His gentle tones grew earnest. His fine face became illumined. His golden periods flowed with more and more of impetuous force, and the climax of their perfect music was always exactly identical with the climax of their thought. There always was a certain culmination of fervent power at which he aimed, and after that a gradual subsidence to the previous level of gracious serenity. You never felt that you had been beguiled by art; you only felt that you had been entranced by nature."

In 1876, Curtis again served as a delegate to the Republican National Convention, supporting Bristow as long as possible and finally voting for Hayes, in opposition to the administration element of the party under Conkling's leadership. In the difficult situation which arose when the election was over, and it appeared that there were a number of electoral votes in dispute, only one of which was needed to secure a victory for the democratic nominee, Curtis counselled moderation and the adoption of a plan of ac-

ion to which both parties should consent, agreeing to abide loyally by the outcome. It was a period of the angriest political passions which, had they not been controlled in time, might easily have led to a second civil war. The way out was at last discovered, and no man deserves more of the credit than Curtis for the fact that reason and good sense prevailed in that critical moment. He struck the key-note of the party of moderation in his speech before the New England Society of New York, December 22, 1876—the first of the speeches upon "The Puritan Principle" above referred to. Edward Everett Hale describes the circumstances under which this speech was poured like oil upon the troubled waters of dissension. There were about three hundred guests at the dinner, which was held at Delmonico's. They were the leaders of public opinion, and nearly every one of them had intense convictions in favor of either Hayes or Tilden. They were about equally divided in sentiment. "Before such an audience Mr. Curtis rose to speak. Instantly—as always—he held them in rapt attention. It would have been perfectly easy for a timid man, or even a person of historic taste, to avoid the great subject of the hour. Mr. Curtis might have talked well about Brewster and Carver, Leyden and Delfthaven, and have left Washington and the White House alone. But he was not a timid man. He was much more than a man of delicate

taste, well trained and elegant. And therefore he plunged right into the terrible subject. Terrible is the only word. He passed from point to point of its intricacies, citing the common sense of the conscientious statesmen of our race; and he came out with his expression of his certain confidence that the good sense of the sons of such an ancestry would devise a tribunal impartial enough and august enough to determine the question to the unanimous assent of the nation. . . . Those three hundred men of mark in New York went home that night, and went to their business the next day, to say that a court of arbitration must be established to settle that controversy. In that moment of Mr. Curtis's triumph, as I believe, it was settled. This is certain: that from that moment, as every careful reader may find to-day, the whole tone of the press of all parties in the city of New York expressed the belief which he expressed then, and which that assembly of leaders approved by their cheers. And from that moment to this moment there has been no more talk of civil war."

President Hayes, soon after his inauguration, offered Curtis the English mission, or any other that he might choose. The honor was declined, partly because Curtis preferred his "present public duty," and partly because he did not feel certain that "a man absolutely without legal training of any kind could

be a proper minister." Writing to congratulate Lowell upon the appointment to Madrid, he said: "On every ground, except that you go away, I am delighted that you are going. With me the case is very different. I happen to be just in the position where I can be of infinitely greater service to the good old cause, and to the administration that is trying to advance it, than I could possibly be abroad." Hayes was an enemy of the spoils system, but most of the leaders of his party were its friends, and the "good old cause" needed all the support it could get. That year saw Curtis again a delegate to the Republican State Convention, and his advocacy of a resolution approving the course of the President with respect to the civil service drew from that hardened spoilsman, Senator Conkling, a vituperative and vulgar personal attack which saddened Curtis, but was hardly calculated to shake his purpose. "It was the saddest sight I ever knew, that man glaring at me in a fury of hate, and storming out his foolish blackguardism. I was all pity. I had not thought him great, but I had not suspected how small he was."

Again in 1880, the presidential year found Curtis in close touch with the political situation. His address of that year on "Machine Politics and the Remedy" was made before the organization of Independent Republicans, who then held the balance of power in the State of New York. Independent

voting was the immediate, and the destruction of the malign power of patronage the ultimate remedy for most of the evils of machine domination. "The man who is proud never to have voted anything but the whole regular party ticket shows the servility of soul which makes despotism possible." "Reform of the civil service, by abolishing patronage, effectually stops the machine, by compelling it to empty its own pockets and not to pick those of the public to pay its way." This seems to be one of the rare occasions when Curtis mixed his metaphors. In this year, Curtis naturally opposed the renomination of Grant, and was on the whole pleased when Garfield appeared as a "dark horse" in the Convention, and received its vote.

The reform of the civil service had made some progress during the term of Hayes, and his successor was known to favor it, although doubts were entertained of his courage and firmness. The New York Civil Service Reform Association, which had been organized in 1877, but had been somnolent for a couple of years, renewed its activities in 1880, with Curtis as president. Garfield's assassination left forever unsettled the question of what he would have done to advance the cause, but the fact that he was murdered by a crazed and disappointed office-seeker did much to open the eyes of men in general to an evil toward which they had hitherto been apathetic.

In August, 1881, when the President was lingering between life and death, the National Civil Service Reform League was organized at Newport, and of this organization also Curtis was "the inevitable president by common consent." Not much was to be expected from President Arthur, who was a spoilsman at heart, but even he recognized a growing public opinion to the extent of recommending the reform to Congress, of signing the Pendleton Act of 1883, of putting that law into operation in good faith, and of naming a competent Commission for its administration. Now at last justification seemed to be provided for the words spoken at Newport by Curtis: "We have laid our hands on the barbaric palace of patronage, and begun to write on its walls 'Mene, mene!' Nor, I believe, will the work end till they are laid in the dust."

The walls outlasted Curtis's day, although they were sadly battered before his death, and he was permitted to rejoice over the great progress made in the work of destruction during Cleveland's first term. Every year from 1882 to 1891, inclusive, he was present at the annual meeting of the National Civil Service Reform League and gave a lengthy address. In 1892 only, failing health made it impossible for him to undertake the journey (this time to Baltimore) and his address was sent to be read by the secretary. Thus there are eleven of these addresses in all, and

they constitute a highly important section of his writings. They review the progress of the reform from year to year, sharply criticising the executive when he lapses from the path of duty, generously praising him when he resists the ravenous demands of the politicians, and making all the while a fair allowance for the inherent weakness of human nature and the almost insuperable difficulties to be overcome in hewing strictly to the line of principle. Much yet remains to be done, but the reform has been making steady progress, with occasional temporary setbacks, for over a quarter of a century, and the moral impetus given it by Curtis remains one of the active forces that keep it going.

In the fall of 1882, there was a little squall in the Harper establishment which led Curtis to resign his editorship of the "Weekly." It was a question of state politics, and the machine candidate for the governorship was nominated by methods that aroused the indignation of the Independent Republicans. Curtis protested against it, but an article sent in from his country home at Ashfield became so modified in printing that it was made to support the objectionable candidate. "My article upon Folger's nomination," he wrote to Norton, "was perverted and made to misrepresent my views, and to make me absolutely ridiculous. The blow to me and to the good cause is very great and not exactly retrievable.

To-day I am thought by every reader of the paper to be a futile fool. The thing is so atrocious as to be comical." The blunder was promptly rectified as far as was possible, by means of a disavowal on the part of the publishers, and a personal statement on the part of Curtis, who thereupon withdrew his resignation, and resumed the work which was continued without further interruption until his death.

VIII

The Republican National Convention of 1884 was held in Chicago, and Curtis was again a delegate, as he had been to the Chicago Convention of 1860. It was clear to him that the salvation of the party had now come to depend upon its adoption of the principles of reform which were at last working as a leaven in the general public consciousness. Years before, he had formulated this pledge for himself and those who were of like mind with him: "That we will try public and private men by the same moral standard, and that no man who directly or indirectly connives at corruption or coercion to acquire office or retain it, or who prostitutes any opportunity or position of public service to his own or another's advantage, shall have our countenance or our vote." It was in accordance with this pledge that he had acted as an Independent Republican in the cam-

paigns of his own State two and four years earlier; he was now forced to take similar action in the sphere of national politics.

The three candidates whose names figured chiefly in the Convention were Arthur, Blaine, and Edmunds, and the latter was the only one of the three that Curtis could consistently support. Early in the proceedings, an attempt was made to shackle the men of independent leanings by a resolution binding all the delegates to support the nominee, whoever he might be. Whereupon Curtis rose and said: "A Republican and a free man I came to this Convention, and by the grace of God a Republican and a free man will I go out of it." The resolution was withdrawn, the regular routine was taken up, and Blaine became the official standard-bearer of the party. This created a situation from which there was no escape for Curtis save to break from the party which he held to have forfeited its claim to the support of upright men. Its nominee was an unblushing spoilsman, a politician who had shown himself unscrupulous in his choice of means to secure desired ends, and was believed, rightly or wrongly, to have made use of public office for private gain. Curtis's feelings were thus stated in his own words: "I should be recreant to my conscience, and I should bitterly disappoint all those who are accustomed to look to me, if, after all that I have said about political morality, I should now

support for the presidency the one man who is most repugnant to the political conscience of young Republicans."

Thus was created the defection that removed from office the party which had controlled the national government for twenty-four years; thus was the power of the independent emphasized, and the epithet "mugwump," derisively applied to him and proudly accepted, added to the current speech of politics. But it was no easy thing for Curtis to sever the political ties of a lifetime, or, although he had no twinges of conscience, to bear the reproaches of friends whose eyes were so blinded by the scales of partisanship as to deem his conduct dishonorable. He could bear with equanimity the insults heaped upon him by lewd fellows of the baser sort, although their scurrility was almost beyond belief, but he cherished the good opinion of the good men who sincerely thought that his course had been ill-advised, and could not fail to be saddened by the loss of their sympathy, despite his conviction that "a majority cannot morally or honorably bind a participant in any consultation to support its action if he morally disapproves of it."

In the campaign of 1888, Curtis again advocated the election of Cleveland, although the administration for the past four years had not measured fully up to the standard expected of it by the reformers.

A few weeks before the election, he wrote to a Western correspondent as follows: "Mr. Cleveland has resisted much in his party, but not as much as I had hoped. But I still regard him as honest and courageous. Now, as the chief issue of the campaign is the method of reducing the revenue, and as I agree with Mr. Cleveland's policy and look upon the Republican policy as very injurious, and as I see that Mr. Blaine is the controlling genius of his party, and that a vote for Mr. Harrison is really a vote for Mr. Blaine, the same principles that made me vote for the Republican candidate formerly induce me to vote for Mr. Cleveland now. . . . In the sense in which you use the words, I am not an adherent of Mr. Cleveland. I have been disappointed in much that he has done, and have said so plainly and publicly. I think him honest, though often sophisticated, and in the present situation support him as the better alternative." He had now come fully to realize, as he said later in his eulogy on Lowell, that "independence of party is much more vitally essential in a republic than fidelity to party," and upon this high plane of political philosophy he lived and labored for the rest of his life.

Of that life only a few facts are left to record. The work for Harper's continued to the end, the work of political leadership in the "Weekly," and the more genial work of the essayist in the monthly magazine. Aside from this work, he edited in 1889,

wisely and tactfully, "The Correspondence of John Lothrop Motley" in two large volumes. His last public address was the tribute to Lowell, mentioned above, given in Brooklyn and New York, February and March, 1892: He was made Chancellor of the University of the State of New York in 1890, after having served as a Regent for over a quarter of a century. To this honorary public service he gave generously of his time, for he was never content to be a figurehead in any undertaking with which his name was associated. He was the recipient of many degrees, from that bestowed by Brown in 1854 to those bestowed by Harvard and Columbia in 1881 and 1887, respectively. In his city of New York, he was a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and an early member of the Century Association. In religious sympathies he was a Unitarian, occasionally reading a sermon of Channing or Martineau in a Staten Island pulpit, and occupying at times high offices in the Unitarian organization.

In the early 'seventies, Curtis had established a summer home, with Norton for a neighbor, in the hill town of Ashfield, in northwestern Massachusetts. Here also, he recognized to the full the simple obligations of good citizenship, and his influence upon the life of this remote rural community was marked in many beneficent ways. Ashfield was the seat of a modest and long-established academy, an

institution which Curtis and Norton did much to strengthen. It was their practice every summer to hold a sort of civic function in connection with the academy, to which guests of national importance were invited. The exercises connected with these Ashfield dinners were of great interest, and came to attract the attention of the entire country. It was at Ashfield that he died, at the age of sixty-eight, after a long illness that brought much suffering, on the last day of August, 1892, and it was in the little Ashfield church that his friends gathered to mourn for him. "Our tears must fall," said Norton, "that we are to see him no more; but our hearts must be glad that his memory belongs to us forever, is part of ourselves, and will be to us a perpetual help and joy."

Mr. Edward Cary, to whose biography of Curtis the present sketch is deeply indebted, quotes an opinion which holds him "the man of all Americans, perhaps the man in all the world, who was most widely held in affectionate regard, the most lovable and loved of all." Speaking in his own person, Mr. Cary says: "He had a gift in the nature of genius for hospitality and for friendship; and it was a curious evidence of the richness and capacity of his nature that, amid strenuous duties and labors that were crowding, exacting, and must have been often exhausting, he was able, not to find, but to make time for such generous social intercourse." Mr.

Parke Godwin, the oldest of the friends who survived him, said that he "touched life at nearly every point at which it is possible for the individual soul to put forth its tendrils into the universe," and further declared that "an aspiration for excellence, in its various forms of justice, truth, goodness, and courtesy, ever cast its light before his eyes and ever whispered in his ears, as the sea murmurs in the sea-shell of a vast beyond which is its proper home." And, Mr. William Winter, almost as old a friend, found these words for a monody:

"O my comrade, O my friend,
If this parting be the end,

"Yet I hold my life divine
To have known a soul like thine.

"And I hush the low lament,
In submission, penitent.

"Still the sun is in the skies;
He sets—but I have seen him rise!"

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